

UNDERSTANDING THE BOOK OF REVELATION



A Revelation step by step

END TIMES

Samir Stephan Kujur

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REVELATION SERVICES

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DEDICATION

This book is dedicated to the Almighty God who inspires, reveals, guides and takes care of me throughout my journey.

ABOUT THE BOOK

Most of us don't like and take interest in reading the *Book of Revelation* for various reasons. There are some who regard this book as simply a puzzle. Revelation is to our modern mind a very weird and fantastic book full of angels, and trumpets, and earthquakes, of beasts, and dragons, and demons of the pit. Well, it's a puzzle to Martin Luther. He never wrote a commentary on it. He says, "My spirit cannot accommodate itself to this book. There is one sufficient reason for the small esteem in which I hold it, that Christ is neither taught in it nor recognized." As a matter of fact, Calvin didn't write a commentary on it, and Zwingli said it's not a book of the Bible. On the other hand, there are those [like Philip Carrington] who think of it as a masterpiece and tendered the book the ultimate compliment. Well, whether we think of it as a puzzle or whether we think of it as a masterpiece, we surely will agree that it's an unusual work. One might ask, "What is the importance of this book?" Some people go through their whole ministry never expounding the book of Revelation, never even studying the book of Revelation in some detail.

This is the concluding book of the Bible and is one of the most valuable books for Christian life. Why is it important? What is the importance of it? Well, first of all it provides the necessary capstone and climax to the word of God. This is the greatest revelation for humankind where Father God, Glorified Jesus, the Holy Spirit, Angels and MAN [John] were engaged to write and convey the messages to Christians. It is a revelation given to Christ by the Father God. I won't for the moment speak about what that means when we say God because Jesus Christ is God, too, but the trinitarian God is the author of the revelation. The Lord Jesus Christ is the executor of it in the sense of the second person, the mediator. And then it is given to an angelic messenger who in turn gives it to the servants of God, specifically the Apostle John. So the triune God, the mediator, the angel, and the apostle [who was guided by the Holy Spirit], what an unheard of, someone has said, what an unheard of authority lies back of the prophecy of the revelation. The triune God, the mediator, the angelic being, and the apostle [who was guided by the Holy Spirit] standing back of these words. In fact, it didn't even originate with Jesus.

As John explains further, Christ received it from his Father, and having received it from the Father, Christ gave it to an angel to reveal to John, so there are, in all, five stages of transmission. And what a pure channel of communication it is, from the Father to the Son to the angel to the apostle [who was guided by the Holy Spirit] to the church, to the readers. So this is a book that has great authority behind it - the trinity, the angels, the apostles. Incidentally, that would indicate that when he says the revelation of Jesus Christ it does not mean the revelation about Jesus Christ, but the revelation that Jesus Christ has because it has been given to him. So he writes, "The revelation of Jesus Christ which God gave to him to shew." So it's Jesus Christ's revelation, which God gave to him, that explains what it is, "to shew unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass; and he sent and signified it by his angel unto his servant John." It's a revelation of Jesus Christ. It belongs to him. And notice the process. God is where it begins.

The content and outcome of this book is based on my research and systematic documentation. This book provides you a compiled version of information about the events that will occur during the end times.

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CHAPTER I

Heavenly Christ and Earthly Church



1.1 INTRODUCTION

The sketch that the LORD gives us in Revelation chapter 1 through chapter 22 is a sketch not of Messiah's early life in Palestine but his ascended life in heaven and then ultimately again upon the new heavens and the new earth. One is the continuation of the other, however, for as you well know Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever. Looking broadly at the Book of Revelation, it's plain that LORD presents Jesus as the overseer of the local church.

When we read Revelation 1, one of the most striking things about that chapter is the vision we see there of Jesus Christ. The first thing we ought to say is, clearly, this is a symbolic picture of who Jesus is. This is not a picture that is to be drawn or taken literally. But we remember that John wrote this book, which is a letter, a prophesy, and also apocalyptic literature, he wrote this book to suffering believers who were, some of them, giving their lives for Jesus Christ and for the gospel. And they were all living under that threat of losing their lives for the gospel. In chapter 1, we have this glorious picture of Jesus Christ as the Son of Man, and we have various descriptions of Jesus there. He is wearing a priestly robe. He is the means by which we enter into God's presence. John pictures him as having white hair, white as snow, which is quite interesting because he is drawing there on Daniel 7, and the person with the white hair in Daniel 7 is Yahweh. Yet John applies that to Jesus, showing that Jesus is equal with Yahweh, that he is fully divine. In this picture we have Jesus having a sharp two-edged sword in his mouth, which is obviously not literal, but it emphasizes the power of his word that can cut and destroy his enemies so that the church can take comfort in Christ. We're told there his face shines with glory, that he is the glorious Lord. Jesus says to John, "He holds the keys of death and Hades." This is what the church was facing. They were facing possible death, and so they were worried, naturally, about their future. And John emphasizes, doesn't he, that Jesus is sovereign, that he is the resurrected one, he is the living one, he is the first and the last, he has conquered death, they need not fear. Does it look as if Nero or Domitian, whoever you think the emperor was at the time — that's debated — but whoever the Roman emperor was, does it look like that emperor was in control, or the political authorities were in control? They're not in control. Jesus reigns, Jesus rules. Everyone will have to reckon with him. So Revelation is fundamentally a book of comfort for the suffering church, a call to persevere, a call to trust that Jesus is the Sovereign, the glorious Lord. He's walking in the midst of the lampstands. They should be comforted and strengthened and continue to hope and to trust in him.

1.2 JESUS CHRIST - THE FAITHFUL WITNESS, THE FIRSTBORN FROM THE DEAD, AND THE RULER OVER THE KINGS OF THE EARTH

- Jesus is the faithful witness: This speaks to Jesus' utter reliability and faithfulness to His Father and to His people, even unto death. The ancient Greek word translated witness is also the word for a martyr.
- Firstborn from the dead: This speaks to Jesus' standing as pre-eminent among all beings, that He is first in priority. Firstborn from the dead means much more than that Jesus was the first person resurrected. It also means that He is pre-eminent among all those who are or will be resurrected. Jesus is the firstborn among many brethren (Romans 8:29).
- Jesus is the ruler over the kings. Before the Book of Revelation is over, Jesus will take dominion over every earthly king. At the present time, Jesus rules a kingdom, but it is a kingdom that is not yet of this world.

1.3 A STATEMENT OF PRAISE TO JESUS

- To Him who loved us: What a beautiful title for Jesus! When loved is used, in the past tense, it points back to a particular time and place where Jesus loved us. It should be pointed out that many translations have loves us, but there is something beautiful about loved us. It looks back to the cross. Every believer should be secure in God's love, not based on their present circumstances (which may be difficult), but based on the ultimate demonstration of love at the cross. This is worth praising Jesus about.
- Paul put it like this in Romans 5:8: But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. The work of Jesus on the cross for us is God's ultimate proof of His love for you. He may give additional proof, but He can give no greater proof.
- No wonder many believers are not secure in knowing the love of Jesus towards them – they look to their present circumstances to measure His love. Instead, they need to look back to the cross, settle the issue once for all, and give praise to Jesus, to Him who loved us.
- And washed us from our sins in His own blood: This is what happened when Jesus loved us at the cross. He washed us – cleansed us from the deep stain of sin, so that we really are clean before Him. This is worth praising Jesus about. If we understand our own deep sinfulness, this seems almost too good to be true. We can stand clean before God – clean from the deepest of stains. No wonder the same Apostle John also wrote, If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness (1 John 1:9).
- In His own blood: If there were any other way to wash us from our sins, God would have done it that other way. To wash us in His own blood meant the ultimate sacrifice of God the Son. God wouldn't do it this way unless it was the only way. "The priests could only cleanse with blood of bulls and goats; but he has washed us from our sins 'in his own blood.' Men are willing enough to shed the blood of others. How readily they will enter upon war! But Christ was willing to shed his own blood, to pour out his soul unto death, that we might be saved."
- Notice the order: first loved, then washed. It wasn't that God washed us out of some sense of duty and then loved us because we were then clean. He loved us while we were dirty, but then He washed us.
- In fact, washing proves love. If you had an old pair of pants, and got them covered in paint, you would only wash them and keep them for two reasons. First, you might wash them and keep them if you were poor. You can't or won't spend money on another pair of pants, so you wash them and keep them. Second, you might wash them and keep them if you really loved those old pants. Money isn't the issue. You could go down and buy a new pair of pants any time; but you love that pair so much that you spend the time and the effort to clean them, and use them again. God loves us so much that He washed us. God certainly is not poor. With merely a thought, He could obliterate every sinner and start over with brand-new creatures. But He doesn't. He loves us so much that He washed us.
- And has made us kings and priests to His God and Father: This is status Jesus gives to those whom He loved in His work on the cross and who are washed... in His own blood. It would have been enough just to love them and cleanse them. But He goes far beyond, and makes us kings and priests to His God and Father. This is more than Adam ever was. Even in the innocence of Eden we never read of Adam among the kings and priests of God. This is worth praising Jesus about.
- We are kings, so we are God's royalty – this is privilege, status, and authority. We are priests, so we are God's special servants. We represent God to man and man to God. We offer sacrifice unto Him (Hebrews 13:15). We have privileged access to God's presence (Romans 5:1-2).
- Kings and priests: In the Old Testament, it was forbidden to combine the offices of king and priest. King Uzziah of Judah is an example of a man who tried to combine the two

offices, and paid the penalty for it (2 Chronicles 26:16-23). Under the New Covenant, we can be like Jesus in the sense that He is both King and High Priest (Luke 1:31-33; Hebrews 4:14).

- To Him be glory and dominion forever and ever: In light of all that Jesus did for us, it is right to praise Him. We should honor Him with all glory and dominion forever and ever. When we say this, we aren't giving Jesus glory and dominion. We are simply recognizing that He has it, and honoring Him for it. To recognize the glory of Jesus is to come out-and-out for Him.
- To recognize the dominion of Jesus is to let Him truly rule over us. "Again, if we truly say, 'To him be glory and dominion,' then we must give him dominion over ourselves. Each man is a little empire of three kingdoms – body, soul, and spirit – and it should be a united kingdom. Make Christ king of it all. Do not allow any branch of those three kingdoms to set up for itself a distinct rule; put them all under the sway of your one King."
- Amen: This word – in the ancient Greek language, brought over from the Hebrew of the Old Testament – simply means "Yes." It isn't a wish that it may be so, but it is an affirmation that, through God, it will be so. Jesus will be praised. Jesus has done all this and more for you. You have much to praise Him for – so praise Him! "Would you not wish to be in heaven when your life on earth is over? The time will come when you must die; would you not desire to have a good hope of entering then into the felicities of the perfected ones? I am sure you would; but if you are at last to be numbered amongst the redeemed host on high, you must here learn their song. You cannot be admitted into the choirs above without having practiced and rehearsed their music here below."

1.4 DESCRIPTION OF THE RETURN OF JESUS

- Behold, He is coming: This is a command to look – to check it out. John moved from praising Jesus to describing His return. He wants us to behold the coming of Jesus. Jesus said that we should watch and wait for His coming (Matthew 24:42). It is something to keep before the eye of our mind, to behold.
- This wasn't a supernatural vision of Jesus' return. That supernatural vision will come later. This description is based from John's understanding of Old Testament promises of the Messiah's return and Jesus' own words about His return. For example, John knew that Jesus was coming because Jesus said He was coming. Jesus said, I will come again and receive you to Myself (John 14:3). "Christ has not gone to heaven to stay there. He has gone for the church's benefit; and for his church's benefit he will return again."
- He is coming with clouds: When Jesus comes, He will be surrounded by clouds. This will be true literally, because when Jesus left this earth, He was taken up into a cloud and God said that He would return in the same manner (Acts 1:9-11). It will also be true figuratively, because multitudes of believers are called clouds in a figurative manner (Hebrews 12:1). Clouds are commonly associated with God's presence and glory (Exodus 13:21-22, 16:10, 19:9, and 24:15-18), relating to the Old Testament cloud of glory called the Shekinah. Understanding this connection with the glory of God, it is fitting – and wonderful – that the multitude of believers is called a cloud. God's people are His glory. They are His "cloud," His Shekinah.
- John didn't need a special vision to know He is coming with clouds. He knew this from the Old Testament (Daniel 7:13-14) and from Jesus' own words: I say to you, hereafter you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Power, and coming on the clouds of heaven (Matthew 26:64).
- And every eye will see Him: When Jesus comes, it won't be a secret coming. Everyone will know. At His first coming, Jesus was somewhat obscure. During His earthly ministry, He never made front-page news in Rome. But when Jesus comes again, every eye will see Him. The whole world will know. John didn't need a special vision to know every eye will see Him. John heard Jesus Himself say, Therefore if they say to you, "Look, He is in the desert!" do not go out; or "Look, He is in the inner rooms!" do not believe it. For as the

lightning comes from the east and flashes to the west, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be (Matthew 24:26-27).

- Even they who pierced Him: When Jesus comes, it will be a particularly meaningful revelation for the Jewish people. Of course, it was not the Jews alone who pierced Him. But we know John had in mind the revelation of Jesus to His own people because this is an allusion to Zechariah 12:10.
- When Jesus reveals Himself to His own people, the Jews, it will not be in anger. By that time, the Jewish nation will have turned to Jesus, trusting in Him as their Messiah (Matthew 23:39, Romans 11:25-26). When they see Jesus and His pierced hands and feet, it will be a painful reminder of their previous rejection of Him. It will fulfill the scene of Zechariah 12:10: And I will pour on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem the Spirit of grace and supplication; then they will look on Me whom they pierced. Yes, they will mourn for Him as one mourns for his only son, and grieve for Him as one grieves for a firstborn. John didn't need a special vision to know even they who pierced Him. He could read it in Zechariah 12:10.
- All the tribes of the earth will mourn because of Him: When Jesus comes, it won't be only the Jewish people who mourn because of their previous rejection of Jesus. Since there will be people saved from all the tribes of the earth (Revelation 7:9), everyone will have a part in this mourning. We will all look at His scars and say "We did this to Him."
- John didn't need a special revelation to know all the tribes of the earth will mourn because of Him. He just needed to remember what Jesus said at Matthew 24:30: Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.

1.5 AN INTRODUCTION FROM JESUS HIMSELF

- I am the Alpha and the Omega: In many translations, and in "Red-Letter" editions, these words are in red. This shows that the translators believed that these were the words of Jesus. John was finished with his introduction, and now Jesus introduced Himself. After all, it is His revelation (the Revelation of Jesus Christ, Revelation 1:1), so it isn't strange that He introduces it.
- Some wonder if it is God the Father or God the Son speaking here. We suspect it is the Son, Jesus Christ, and we believe this for many reasons. First, since it is Jesus' Revelation, it seems appropriate that He introduced it. Second, the titles Alpha and Omega and the Beginning and the End are titles claimed by Jesus (Revelation 22:13). Third, though the title who is and who was and who is to come is used of God the Father in Revelation 1:4, it is also true of God the Son, and seems to be directed to Jesus in Revelation 11:17 and 16:5.
- The Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End: The idea behind these titles for Jesus is that He is before all things and will remain beyond all things. Alpha was the first letter of the ancient Greek alphabet, and Omega was the last letter. Jesus says, "I am the 'A to Z,' the Beginning and the End."
- If Jesus is both the Beginning and the End, then He also has authority over everything in-between. This means that Jesus has a plan for history, and He directs the path of human events toward His designed fulfillment. Our lives are not given over to blind fate, to random meaninglessness, or to endless cycles with no resolution. Instead, Jesus Christ who is the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End directs all of human history and even our individual lives.
- Who is and was and who is to come: As shown in the comments on Revelation 1:4, this phrase communicates the idea behind the great Old Testament name for the Triune God, Yahweh. It reflects His eternal nature and His unchanging presence. Jesus has this eternal nature just as much as God the Father does. Micah 5:2 prophetically expressed it this way: Whose goings forth are from of old, from everlasting. Hebrews 13:8 expressed it this way: Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever.

- The Almighty: This word Almighty translates the ancient Greek word *pantokrater*, which literally means “the one who has his hand on everything.” It speaks of the great sovereign control of Jesus over everything – past, present, and future.
- This great word Almighty is used ten times in the New Testament, and nine of the ten times are in the Book of Revelation. This book has a striking emphasis on God’s sovereignty, the understanding that He has His hand on everything.

1.6 JOHN’S VISION OF JESUS

- I turned to see the voice: We can only imagine what went through John’s mind as he turned. The voice he heard was probably not exactly the same sound as he remembered Jesus’ voice to be (John described it as of a trumpet, Revelation 1:10). Yet he knew from the voice’s self-description (Alpha and Omega) that it was Jesus. This was John’s opportunity to see Jesus again, after knowing Him so well during the years of His earthly ministry.
- First, John didn’t see Jesus. He saw seven golden lampstands. These were not candlesticks, they were not menorahs, but they were free standing oil lamp stands. The lamps set on these lampstands. There were seven separate lampstands. This is an image that reminds us of the golden lampstand that stood in the tabernacle and the temple (Exodus 25:31-37). Yet this is different. The Old Covenant lampstand was one lampstand with seven lamps on it. Here in the New Covenant, we see seven lampstands. “In the Jewish tabernacle there was on golden candlestick, and seven lamps, to give light... John here seeth seven. God had but one church of the Jews, but many among the Gentiles.”
- The light doesn’t come from the lampstands. The light comes from the oil lamps themselves. The stands merely make the light more visible. Therefore, the lampstands are a good picture of the church. We don’t produce the light, we simply display it. “A lamp is not light in itself, it is only the instrument of dispensing light, and it must receive both oil and fire before it can dispense any; so no Church has in itself either grace or glory, it must receive all from Christ its head, else it can dispense neither light nor life.”
- And in the midst of the seven lampstands One like the Son of Man: Jesus was there in the midst of these lampstands, as the Son of Man, a figure of glory looking back to Daniel 7:13-14. Though the title Son of Man sounds like a humble title, in light of the Daniel passage, it is not a humble title at all.
- Clothed with a garment down to the feet and girded about the chest with a golden band: The clothing of Jesus indicates that He is a person of great dignity and authority. Long garments were only worn by those who didn’t have to work much, so they were a picture of great status and authority. The golden band around the chest probably hints at the garments of the high priest (Exodus 29:5).
- Exodus 39:1-5 says that there were golden threads in the band that went around the chest of the high priest of Israel. Jesus’ band has more than a few golden threads. It is all gold! How much greater is the eternal, heavenly priesthood of Jesus!
- One of the duties of the Old Testament priests was to tend the golden lampstand in the tabernacle. Every day they had to fill the oil, clean the soot, and trim the wicks. They had to closely inspect and care for the lamps so they would burn continually before the Lord. Here is Jesus, our High Priest, in the midst of the seven lampstands, carefully inspecting and caring for the lamps, helping them to always burn brightly before the Lord.

1.7 JOHN DESCRIBES JESUS

- His head and hair were white like wool: The white hair speaks of old age, and is therefore in that culture connected with the idea of great wisdom and timelessness. The phrase white as snow also emphasizes the idea of purity (Isaiah 1:18).

- The white hair and head also connect Jesus with the Ancient of Days in Daniel 7:9. “The term of Ancient of Days belongs to God the Father, yet it also agreeth to Christ, who is equal with the Father as to his Divine nature.” “When we see in the picture his head and his hair white as snow, we understand the antiquity of his reign.” “This was not only an emblem of in antiquity, but it was evidence of his glory; for the whiteness of splendour of his head and hair doubtless proceeded from the rays of light and glory which encircled his head, and darted from it in all directions.”
- His eyes like a flame of fire: Fire is often associated with judgment in the Scriptures (Matthew 5:22, 2 Peter 3:7). Jesus’ eyes displayed the fire of searching, penetrating judgment.
- His feet were like fine brass: Since fire is connected with judgment, these feet like fine brass, as if refined in a furnace speak of someone who has been through the fires of judgment and has come forth with a refined purity. Jesus has been through the “Refiner’s Fire.”
- Brass is a metal connected with judgment and sacrifice. Israel’s altar of sacrifice was made of brass (Exodus 27:1-6), and it was called the “brazen altar.” Brass is also a strong metal, the strongest known in the ancient world. Therefore feet... like fine brass are “An emblem of his stability and permanence, brass being considered the most durable of all metallic substances or compounds.”
- His voice as the sound of many waters: This means that Jesus’ voice had the power and majesty of a mighty waterfall.
- He had in His right hand seven stars: The seven stars speak of the leaders or representatives of the seven churches mentioned in Revelation 1:11 (Revelation 1:20). The stars are securely in the hand of Jesus. Since seven is the number of completion, we can say that “He’s got the whole church in His hands.”
- Out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword: This is a heavy sword (the ancient Greek word *rhomphaia*), used to kill and destroy. Sometimes the New Testament speaks of a smaller, more tactical sword known in the ancient Greek language as the *machaira*. Hebrews 4:12 uses the term for this smaller, more precise sword.
- The idea of it coming out of His mouth is not that Jesus carries a sword in His teeth. The idea is that this sword is His word. His weapon – and ours also – is the Word of God (Ephesians 6:17). Barnes notes that John didn’t necessarily see a sword coming out of Jesus’ mouth. “He heard him speak; he felt the penetrating power of his words; and they were as if a sharp sword proceeded from his mouth.”
- It is a sharp two-edged sword: “There is no handling this weapon without cutting yourself, for it has no back to it, it is all edge. The Word of Christ, somehow or other, is all edge.”
- His countenance was like the sun shining in its strength: The glory of Jesus is so great, so shining, that it is hard to even look upon Him. Jesus has the same glory as in His transfiguration, when His face shone like the sun (Matthew 17:2). “His face was like the disk of the sun in the brightest summer’s day, when there were no clouds to abate the splendour of his rays.”
- “What do you see in Christ’s right hand? Seven stars; yet how insignificant they appear when you get a sight of his face! They are stars, and there are seven of them; but who can see seven stars, or, for the matter of that, seventy thousand stars, when the sun shineth in his strength? How sweet it is, when the Lord himself is so present in a congregation that the preacher, whoever he may be, is altogether forgotten! I pray you, dear friends, when you go to a place of worship, always try to see the Lord’s face rather than the stars in his hand; look at the sun, and you will forget the stars.”
- Everything in this vision speaks of strength, majesty, authority and righteousness. There is an impressive difference between this vision of Jesus and the many weak, effeminate portrayals of Jesus seen today. But the Jesus that John saw is the real Jesus, the Jesus that lives and reigns in heaven today.

- We should consider the fact that this is the only physical description of Jesus given to us in the Bible. The only other description that comes close is in Isaiah 53:2: He has no form or comeliness; and when we see Him, there is no beauty that we should desire Him.
- In our modern pictures of Jesus, we like to think of Him as He was, not Jesus as He is. We prefer to see and know Jesus after the flesh. But Paul said, Even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know Him thus no longer (2 Corinthians 5:16).

1.8 JOHN'S REACTION AND JESUS' ASSURANCE

- When I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead: John was overwhelmed by this awesome vision, even though he was an apostle who knew Jesus on this earth. Even the three years John spent with Jesus on this earth did not really prepare him to see Jesus in His heavenly glory. At this moment, John knew what a miracle it was that Jesus could shield His glory and authority while He walked this earth. "Blessed position! Does the death alarm you? We are never so much alive as when we are dead at his feet." "It matters not what aileth us if we lie at Jesus' feet. Better be dead there than alive anywhere else."
- He laid His right hand on me: First, Jesus comforted John with a compassionate touch. Perhaps the touch of Jesus felt more familiar than the appearance of Jesus. Then Jesus gave John a command: "Do not be afraid." John didn't need to be afraid because He was in the presence of Jesus, and Jesus clearly identifies Himself to John with three titles.
- Jesus is the First and the Last, the God of all eternity, Lord of eternity past and eternity future.
- Jesus is the one who lives, and was dead, and is alive forevermore. He has the credentials of resurrection, and lives to never die again. The victory that Jesus won over sin and death was a permanent victory. He didn't rise from the dead just to die again.
- Jesus is the one who has the keys of Hades and of Death. Some imagine that the devil is somehow the "lord of Hell." Some imagine that the devil has authority or power to determine life or death. Clearly, they are wrong, for only Jesus holds the keys of Hades and of Death. We can trust that Jesus never lets the devil borrow the keys.

1.9 EARTHLY CHURCH

A blessing is pronounced upon those who read, hear, and keep those things written in the Book of Revelation. The early church read the entire book of Revelation every time they met. This is the only book in the Bible that promises a blessing to those who read it, and those who listen to it being read. The preacher and the congregation that heed the teachings taught here will be blessed.

John became the apostolic leader of the church at Ephesus following the death of Paul and the destruction of Jerusalem by Rome (A.D. 70). The Ephesian church had established a number of daughter churches throughout the province of "Asia" (western Asia Minor), and John exercised pastoral and apostolic care of them. The blessing comes from the triune Godhead: God the Father, the Holy Spirit, and Jesus Christ. "Him which is" is a paraphrase of the name Jehovah or Yahweh (Exodus 3:14): "I AM".

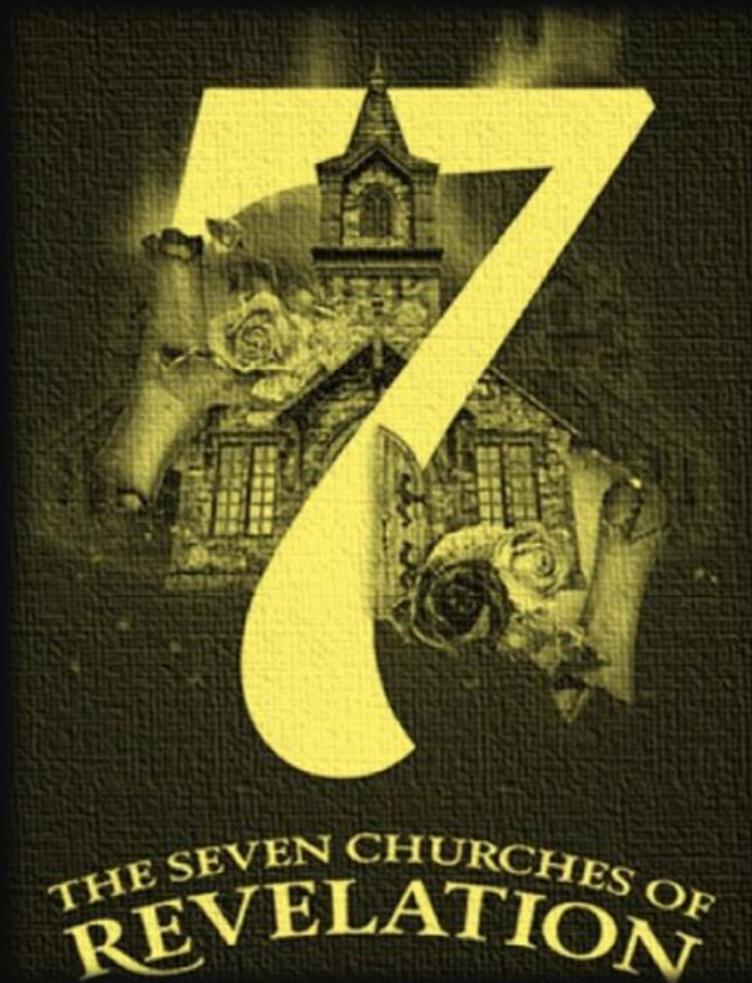
"Seven churches which are in Asia": Asia Minor, equivalent to modern Turkey, was composed of 7 postal districts. At the center of those districts were 7 key cities which served as central points for the dissemination of information. It is to the churches in those cities that John writes.

"From him which is, and which was, and which is to come": God's eternal presence is not limited by time. He has always been present and will come in the future. The number seven means spiritually complete. I believe this number is symbolic of all churches for all time. These seven

churches were probably literal churches of that day as well as giving us a view of the churches of our day in general. These seven Spirits take in all the Spirits of God.

CHAPTER II

Things are not Right on Earth: Letters to the Seven Churches



2.1 INTRODUCTION

In Revelation chapters 2 and 3 when the letters to the seven churches are given it's quite evident that he is the one who has absolute authority over the local church. He holds the seven stars in his right hand. Now, that is LORD's way of revealing to mankind that which Paul affirmed, that Jesus Christ is the head over the church. He warns about the idolatry and immortality existed in the churches.

Revelation 2 and 3 are absolutely key to the letter of the book of Revelation because they give us in many ways the application points for the church, the characteristics that the churches are asked to manifest. And one special one is found in the refrain at the end of each of the messages to the church, which is to overcome — "to the church who overcomes." "To those who overcome," it says. And that reminds us of the need to persevere. But there's other overarching themes as well, so one of the words that you'll encounter as you're reading through those two chapters a number of times is to repent, for those churches who are falling short of what the Lord is calling them to, they are to repent. Should it be that they've lost their first love, should it be that they've been following the teachings of a sectarian group or really a heretical group within the church, they're called to repent from that as well. And so, the Lord is calling them back to himself in that moment. But he's also calling those who do love him to continue and those who are persevering to continue in that as well, and to stay true to the faith, but to stay true especially to the worship of the Lord.

The similarities between the letters in Revelation 2 and 3 alert us to the main ideas in this section. Christ was addressing these churches as their rightful king. He was aware of their present circumstances and had the authority to evaluate them. He offered blessings and he threatened curses to encourage their faithfulness. And he reminded them that eternal salvation was only for those who overcame trials and temptations. Not surprisingly, these themes also play a major role throughout the main body of the book of Revelation. These chapters can be summarised as follows:

- Corrupted world
- Compromised church

2.2 SEVEN CHURCHES

2.2.1 Ephesus

We read the letter to Ephesus in Revelation 2:1-7. The letter introduces Jesus as the one who holds seven stars in his right hand as he walks among the seven golden lampstands. This description emphasized the light of Christ's glory and power. As their king, Jesus gave a mixed evaluation of the church in Ephesus. They had commendable zeal for sound doctrine and didn't tolerate wicked behavior. They were specifically said to have hated the practices of the Nicolaitans, a very early heretical group that may have mixed Christian faith with pagan eroticism. But the Ephesian church also received a strong criticism. In Revelation 2:4 Jesus told them that they had forsaken their first love; they had lost their enthusiasm and zeal for Christ and his kingdom. So, Christ warned them that if they didn't repent and return to their earlier enthusiasm, he would remove their lampstand — their symbol of honor in heaven. In other words, they would be disciplined and perhaps even disbanded.

The first church addressed is the church that was at the city of Ephesus, the most important of the seven cities. It was not the official capital of the province, Pergamum was, but Ephesus was the greatest city. It was a port city. It was a commercial center. The trade routes from the east and

the south all terminated there at Ephesus. So, it was a wealthy city; it was a materialistic place. It was also a center of pagan worship. The cult of Artemis, or Diana, was there. Diana was the goddess of the hunt, and among the Greeks that was perhaps relatively innocuous, but among the Ephesians, which was not only a Greek but an Asian city – a kind of amalgamation of both – the goddess took on more of the Asian qualities of religion, and it became a very sensual, hedonistic religion of Artemis. The temple of the goddess was a very large temple. In fact, it was one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. So, the city of Ephesus stood in the shadow of this great temple, and it was under the spell of paganism and the occult. The so-called Ephesian letters, which circulated throughout the ancient world, were charms that were widely believed to heal sickness and bring luck.

This was the city Paul visited on his second missionary journey. He spent over two years there. During that time there was a great revival. The gospel spread throughout this great city and beyond, throughout the province of Asia. Later, after he left, Paul sent Timothy to the church to supervise the work, and according to tradition, John lived there in his old age at the last years of his life. Ephesus was a dark place. It was an evil city, and men love the darkness rather than the light, for their deeds are evil. Paul certainly knew that from his own experiences. When he came to Ephesus, this great pagan city, and began preaching the gospel, the synagogues and the temples began to empty, and the church began to fill. And that brought on a strong reaction from both the Jews and the Gentiles. In particular the Gentiles – the silversmiths, you read in Acts 19, revolted against that, and staged a great demonstration and sought the life of the apostle. In fact, when he writes to the Corinthians, in 1 Corinthians 15:32 he speaks of that. Speaks of opposition, at least, in Ephesus, and he says, “I fought with wild beasts at Ephesus.” He’s probably not referring to literal wild beasts, as though they had thrown him to the arena. That’s a description of men, and how the unbelieving man can respond when he hears the gospel – doesn’t like it. It stirs up that which is really evil within him. He opposes it as fiercely as a wild beast. The Ephesian Christians faced that same opposition; they faced those wild beasts as well. They knew what it was to be hated. They knew what it was to be snubbed in public, ostracized at work, or to suffer financial loss, and there’s evidently a lot of that in these churches as we go through these letters. They faced the possibility of financial ruin for the faith. Now, that’s a great test of one’s faith, and these Ephesians must’ve experienced that as well as the threat and the reality of physical persecution. Ephesus was a center of emperor worship. The penalty could be harsh for not honoring Domitian as lord and god, and these people were required to go to the temple and take a pinch of incense and offer it on the altar, and confess that Domitian, this Roman emperor, was lord and god of the earth. Well, they couldn’t do that. They refused to do that, and they suffered the consequences. They accepted that, though; they accepted hardship, and the Lord praised them for it. He says in Revelation 2: 3, “You have perseverance and have endured for my name’s sake, and have not grown weary.” The Lord knows what it is to go through such an experience. He knows what it is to be rejected. He endured that himself.

2.2.2 Smyrna

The letter to the church at Smyrna appears in Revelation 2:8-11. It opens with a description of Jesus as “the First and the Last, who died and came to life again.” This description identified Jesus as the one who created all things, and as the focal point of creation’s final destiny. This is one of only two letters that doesn’t include a rebuke for wrongdoing. It focuses entirely on sympathy and understanding for the church in Smyrna, which faced serious persecution, probably because of unbelieving Jews.

Smyrna, an old city thirty-five miles north of Ephesus still exists and many of you perhaps have been there. She called herself the “Ornament of Asia”. It’s known today by the name Izmir. Many

of those ancient cities in Asia Minor debated among themselves about which city was the greatest of the cities and this was the claim of Smyrna. It had a beautiful harbor, one of the landlocked harbors that made for an excellent place for ships to come. There were foothills just beyond the harbor and then beyond the foothills, the argos or "the hill". Overlooking the city was Mount Pagus. It rose over 500 feet from the harbor. And the hill was covered with the temples and buildings, very beautiful buildings in the time of the writing of this particular letter. Around the mountain and through the city was a famous avenue called "the street of gold." And the hill with the temples upon it in the shape of the city was called the "Crown of Smyrna". At either end of that great boulevard was a temple; one to Cybele, the other to Zeus, so it was a city filled with pagan shrines, and the first city in the ancient world to build a temple to the goddess Roma. Smyrna claimed to be the birthplace of Homer, but there were many others who claimed to be the birthplace of Homer. His head was on the coins of the city.

It was a very important city. Commercially it commanded the trade of the Hermus valley. It was politically a free city and also an assize city so that important legal cases were also allowed to be settled there. Smyrna was famous for its loyalty to Rome. On one occasion the citizens stripped off their coats and sent them to the Roman legions, who were suffering from cold in a winter campaign. Before Rome became great, Smyrna was loyal to it. Loyal in times of danger, loyal to Rome in times of difficulty – so much so that Cicero said Smyrna was "the most faithful of our allies."

Religiously it was the center of the worship of Caesar, and the worship of Caesar was carried on in this way. Of course, the Romans had difficult problem as a political empire because they had people within their empire from all kinds of backgrounds, and languages, and places. And they were always looking for ways by which they might unify the citizens of the empire. And one of the ways that they hit upon was to support the worship of Caesar. It didn't really mean too much to the Romans, but it meant something to them politically, religiously it had no significance. They did not mind if you worshipped Caesar and any other god you wished to worship, but at least by requiring every citizen once a year to take some incense and burn it to Caesar, and say, "Caesar is lord," that is the way by which they thought they might have a binding of the citizens of the empire to Rome itself.

Of course, the Christians could not do that. They could not say, "Caesar is lord," and therefore, because they could not burn the incense, and say, "Cesar is Lord," they did not have the identifying document that the others were given. And therefore, they were the object of a great deal of persecution and particularly in the city of Smyrna, because Smyrna was a city with a very large population of Jews. And at this time, of course, the Jewish people in more recent days having been involved in the crucifixion of our Lord and the persecution of the apostles themselves were naturally very opposed to the Christian movement. And probably also because many in the Christian movement were Jewish people, the leaders themselves were all Jews at one time. So, in Smyrna there was a great deal of difficulty between the Jews and the Christians. It's not surprising that our Lord should say, "I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan."

This little letter to Smyrna is very interesting in the light of its probably spiritual significance. Smyrna was the name for myrrh, a resonance or resonance gum that was used for embalming. And if you have read through the New Testament and I hope that you have read through it more than once, you'll remember some of the places where the term myrrh is found. For example, it's found in Matthew 2:11 because when the wise men came to see the birth of our Lord and see the baby, they brought gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. Myrrh suggests suffering. And the fact

that they brought gold, frankincense, and myrrh at his birth suggests that the baby was destined to suffer. And then later, you'll remember when our Lord was on the cross in Mark 15, it is stated that he was given wine mingled with myrrh. And finally, perhaps you remember, too, that in John 19:39 the myrrh is mentioned again and in connection with the burial of our Lord. The text reads this way, John chapter 19:39, "And there came also Nicodemus, which at the first came to Jesus by night, and brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about a hundred-pound weight." And using the myrrh they embalmed the body of our Lord. So the suffering servant of Jehovah, for that was his place in the prophetic program, is buried in such a way as to suggest that the reason that he is the servant of God and has finished his work is that he has suffered in the atoning sacrifice. One of the interesting things about the word of God is the way in which Scriptures are tried and used in the study of particular events. In Isaiah 60:6, when the prophet writes about the Second Advent of the suffering servant Jehovah, he states that those who bring him gifts bring him gifts of gold and frankincense, but no myrrh. And it has been suggested by Bible students the reason that the myrrh is not given in the Second Advent as a gift to the reigning King is that the suffering is over. Whether that's the point or not, the prophet doesn't specify, but it may be. At any rate, in the letter to the church at Smyrna our Lord, as the suffering one, presents himself to a church that this destined to suffer. And as a matter of fact, as all of those early churches did, they were probably already suffering a great deal.

The most famous martyrdom of the early church occurred in Smyrna when Polycarp, one of the church fathers – and as a young man, a personal friend of the apostle John – was burned alive. Both the Jews and Gentiles fetched the wood for the fire. So Smyrna was a prosperous city, a pagan city, and a persecuting city. But the Lord's message to the church there in that city was "Fear not, I am with you," so it was a protected church. We can see in Acts and in the other New Testament books that right away the claim that Jesus is the Messiah begins to divide synagogues. And Paul is a great example of someone who's put out of the synagogue. For example, in Ephesus he goes and teaches in a school hall, or we began to see Christians who are meeting in households instead of in synagogue gatherings. One of the things that puts a lot of pressure on that relationship early on is of course the claim that Jesus is the Messiah, but also the influx of Gentiles. We began to see that those who are preaching Christianity are preaching Jesus as the Lord over all the nations. And we began to see Gentiles responding. And so, the various sensibilities about the food laws, about circumcision began to add more pressure. And we see these sorts of disputes break out like at Galatia, over whether or not these Gentiles are to keep the Law. The other thing that is putting a lot of pressure on this relationship is the way that both of them are relating to Rome and Rome's power. We know of course, for example, that the Temple is destroyed in A.D. 70. And even before that, that's because of Jewish revolution against Caesar, and so in the wake of that we see Jews trying to re-establish their identity. And they began to discuss that, and what that should look like. And that adds further to the separation between Christians and Jews. Despite the problems the Jews in Smyrna created for the church, Jesus exhorted his followers to faithfulness, and encouraged them to trust him because he had overcome death.

2.2.3 Pergamum

Next, Christ addressed the church in Pergamum in Revelation 2:12-17. Letter introduces Christ as the one who "has the sharp, double-edged sword." Jesus' words are razor-sharp, able to judge between right and wrong. And this was directly relevant because his evaluation of the church was both positive and negative. Listen to what Jesus said in Revelation 2:13-14: You did not renounce your faith in me, even in the days of Antipas, my faithful witness, who was put to death in your city — where Satan lives. Nevertheless, I have a few things against you (Revelation 2:13-14).

Jesus followed his commendation with a rebuke: the church had failed to reject the Nicolaitans, as well as teachings that were associated with Balaam. These false teachers led many into pagan revelry and immorality. And Christ warned that he would discipline the church if they didn't repent.

Now it would be, I think, helpful for us to just say a few words about Pergamum as a city of Asia Minor. Pergamum was a center of religion. And it had several claims to fame. Let me put them this way to simplify, historically it was the greatest city of Asia because it was the capital of Asia for four centuries. Culturally it was a university type of town, not a commercial type of town. It had a library of two hundred thousand volumes, which was a vast library in those days, second only to the great library in Alexandria in Egypt. Religiously it contained a host of temples. It also had the Great Altar of Zeus before Athena's Temple eight hundred feet up on a conical hill. It also had the temple of Escalapius, also called Esculapius. But Escalapius was the god of healing. And the god of healing had, as you know perhaps, the symbol of a serpent. In fact, you find it on the back of our medical doctors because it's associated with our physicians. And you'll see the sign of the serpent which was the sign of Escalapius. The emblem, as we said, the serpent. In verse 13 he says, "I know where thou dwellest, even where Satan's throne is." And then at the conclusion of verse 13, this is mentioned again, "Where Satan dwelleth."

Politically, Pergamum was the center of the worship of Caesar. The first temple in which Caesar was worshiped was built in Pergamum. And if you remember, it was the custom in order to unite the Roman Empire politically, it was a custom for an individual once a year to come burn a piece a little bit of incense in the temple and then say, "Caesar is Lord." Now those who took that seriously were relatively few. It was designed by Rome not simply as a religious device but primarily as a political device. If you could get everybody to come and go through the same ritual it bound the people together politically. But obviously a Christian would have difficulty with that if he took those words seriously.

Now in that earlier part of the 4th Century of the Christian church, the monarch of the Roman Empire died and that left open the question of succession. There was a dispute over it. On the one hand in the West, Constantine stood out as one who had perhaps the power to become the emperor, and then in the East there was Maxentius who led the forces of the East, and these two were going to settle this by a war. They met near a little river in Northern Italy, and you may perhaps have heard of the place as the place of the Milvian Bridge. The Western General, Constantine, had some minor contact with Christianity and so that night he made a vow. And his vow was a vow to the Lord as he understood it. It probably was a vow to Satan in reality, but nevertheless it was a vow, and his vow was that if he won this battle, he would become a Christian. Well if also, and this is part of the fable that has arisen around this, he is supposed to have seen a vision in the sky and in the vision in the sky he saw the words *In hoc signo vinces*, which in Latin means, "By this sign," or, "In this sign you shall conquer." So we can ignore all of this what someone has called this monkish accretion to the truth, but he had made, it seems, a bargain with some power, some supernatural power, to join the church organization if he won his battle.

Now I guarantee you that if today such a thing were to happen everybody, let us put it this way, not everybody, but the vast majority of the Christian church would think that would be great. It would be great if the Roman Empire, if the Roman Emperor, should become a Christian that would be great. Just think of how many people would be influenced by it. The Christian church, the evangelical world, would rejoice over this. They would think that would be great. I'm not sure at all it would be great. Because look what happened in the Roman Empire when Constantine became a Christian. But actually, what happened was that the world became united with the

church. The world came into the church and when the world comes into the church the church loses its power and authority. And that's what happened. That's one of the great dangers and perils of comporting with the world. So, the priests of the pagan temples had been paid from the coffers of the Roman Empire. But now if the emperor has become a Christian what do you do if you're a priest of Mars, or a priest of Venus, or priest of one of those other ancient religions? What do you do? Well, you go immediately to the baptismal font and there you are baptized. You become a Christian too. So that's what happened. And so, the priests of Mars and the priests of Venus not having been born again became the reverends and the doctors of Christianity. And the church and the world became united.

Constantine was quote "converted". There is no evidence that he was born again. In fact, given, I must admit of course, he was a bitter foe of all true Christianity, but in his great work he says these words, "The sublime theory of the gospel made a much fainter impression on his heart than on his understanding. As he gradually advanced in the knowledge of the truth he proportionately declined in the practice of virtue." And the same year of the reign in which he convened the council of Nice, one of the great councils of the Christian church, he was polluted by the execution, or rather murder, of his eldest son.

Now you can see what kind of a place Pergamum was, it was a place where Antipas had lost his life for the Christian faith. And incidentally he's called the same thing that Jesus is called in chapter 1, the faithful witness. Its translated martyr here, but the word that is translated martyr and the word that is translated witness are the same word in the original text and only the context can tell us whether it's to have the sense of witness or martyr. And here "my faithful witness" would have made just as good sense but wouldn't it be nice to be called the same thing that our Lord is called, "the faithful witness".

One of the striking things about the city of Pergamum is that Pergamum became the headquarters of the religion of the Babylonians, because the Mageans were driven out of Babylon and they found their way to Pergamum and there they set up shop. So, in Pergamum was the great high priest of the Babylonian religion, that's a striking thing, isn't it? The high priest of the Babylonian religion was called Pontifex Maximus. That's striking itself, isn't it? Pontifex, as you know, comes from two Latin words, one being the word for a bridge, pons, and fex coming from facio which means "to make" or "to do". So, and Maximus is the superlative of the Latin adjective magnus, which means "great". So that the result in Pontifex Maximus means, "the great bridge builder." Now the reason for that term "the great bridge builder" is that it was the claim of the Babylonian high priests that they stood between God and Hell as effective leaders and directors of men. The title, as you know, has been attached now to the Pope, Pontifex Maximus, that's the means by which it came to the Roman Church. From Babylon, through Pergamum, ultimately to Rome, and now is used of the Pope.

2.2.4 Thyatira

The letter to the church in Thyatira appears in Revelation 2:18-29. Letter describes Jesus as a purifying fire, with eyes like blazing fire and feet like burnished bronze. This description relates directly to the letter's content, because the church at Thyatira needed to be refined and purified. In Revelation 2:19-20, Jesus had this to say: I know your deeds, your love and faith, your service and perseverance, and that you are now doing more than you did at first. Nevertheless, I have this against you: You tolerate that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess. By her teaching she misleads my servants (Revelation 2:19-20).

Unlike the church in Ephesus, the Thyatirans hadn't lost their first love for Christ. Instead, their love had actually increased. But they tolerated the false teaching of a particular woman, whom Jesus pejoratively called "Jezebel." Just like the infamous Queen Jezebel who appears in 1 and 2 Kings, this woman seduced people into sexual immorality and idolatry — two closely related practices among pagans in Asia Minor. Jesus warned this church to reject these false teachings and to remain faithful to him. This isn't the actual queen Jezebel who once actually lived. This Jezebel mentioned in Revelation 2:20 was more likely a Jezebel type. She was a woman who actually was living and harming the church at Thyatira.

One cannot understand the message of the letter to Thyatira and trait of this women, if we do not understand something of the situation at Thyatira and the background of Jezebel.

Thyatira was a commercial city, a town of merchants and craftsman, which is addressed to the least important of the seven cities mentioned in the Book of Revelation [seven churches], but surely not the least interesting. Thyatira was a church that was suffering a sorcerer, conniving with a crone, and winking at a witch in her midst.

We're not surprised then that the Laura Ashley of the day was Lydia. She was an individual of whom we read in Acts 16:14, that she was from Thyatira and that her business was the business of dye. Now, the dye was common in Thyatira was taken from some plants and also some little shellfish. One drop of which was responsible for the purple dye that was so valued by the ancients. In fact, to have one pound of this dye cost about two hundred dollars in today's value. So one can see that it's expensive, and Lydia was a merchant lady of some success. She was, according to the Book of Acts 16:14 she was in Philippi and carrying on her business. We read there, "And a certain woman, named Lydia, a seller of purple of the city of Thyatira, which worshiped God heard us," so Thyatira as a home, a commercial city particularly dealing with the purple dye.

Thyatira was one of the least important of these cities, no doubt about that, but in its guilds was its power, so that the commercial guilds governed the life of Thyatira. That means that anyone who lived in Thyatira was a person who was associated with the business of the city, had to be associated with the business of the city, and was faced with some particular problems because in the ancient guilds they were very much like fraternities or sororities. An individual who was in a guild, and most of the citizens no doubt was associated with them, had particular meetings in which they got together, discussed their own affairs, and generally had a pretty good time. One of the things that they did was, they began every meeting, usually, with a sacrifice. And that sacrifice was a sacrifice that was made to one of the heathen deities that they were attached to. And then, of course, even in the invitation references were made to the deities that were to be celebrated in their festivities around the tables. Generally speaking, they began with a cup of wine, but this cup of wine was poured out as a libation and an offering to the gods. So they not only had the sacrificed and the food that they ate was the food that had been sacrificed in honour of some of the gods, but even as they began their meals, there was a reference in their opening grace so to speak, to the Heathen Gods. And then, at the end of the meal, the same thing would take place. So, they were business gatherings in one sense, but in everything in their business gatherings the heathen gods were honoured. So, the problem at Thyatira was that here is a church that evidently is compromising, to some extent, the holy truth of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Now, who was Jezebel? What she did in ancient times in the 9th Century? Jezebel was remembered from Sidon. Her father was a king and so she was a princess, and she was married to king Ahab. And she worshiped the Baals or a Baal god, and consequently, as you read the Old Testament, particularly 1 Kings and then even their references to her in 2 Kings, she was an individual who was an immoral person. As later on she was involved in witchcraft and whoredoms. The worship of Baal included sacrificing their own children and cultic prostitution—it was a very evil religion. But, nevertheless, the primary thing that Jezebel sought to do was to erect the worship of Baal into the worship of Yahweh-GOD, so that both could be worshiped

together in the same worship. In other words, to dilute the once and for all character of the God of Israel, Yahweh, and now worship the Baal along with the Lord God. So, she did not wish to eliminate, or at least she did not publicly to eliminate the worship of Yahweh-GOD, she just wanted the individuals to worship Yahweh and Baal. We live in a pluralistic society. You can worship anyone if you want to, and that's supposed to be good, but that's not good for a Christian. So, Baal and God. She was Ahab's evil genius because she had evidently such control over him that this was allowed to continue.

Well, Jezebel evidently believed that one should have the worship of Baal along with the worship of Yahweh, and she did everything that she possibly could to arrange for that. You know, of course, the climactic struggle between Elijah and Jezebel [1Kings 18], and the four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal, and the great struggle that took place on Mount Carmel when Elijah, by God's unique authority, overcame the prophets and slew them and established, for a time at least, the fact that the Lord God was the Lord God. Then Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah saying "So may the gods do to me and even more, if I do not make your life as the life of one of them by tomorrow about this time." And he was afraid and arose and ran for his life..." (1 Kings 19:2-3a) This is one bad woman.

Now this is Jezebel. But what did she teach? Well, she taught two satanic doctrines. One, she taught that they should commit fornication. Notice the Revelation 2:24, "But unto you I say, unto the rest in Thyatira, as many as have not this doctrine, and which have not known the depths of Satan, as they speak; I will put upon you none other burden." But in the Revelation 2:20, "That woman Jezebel, she calls herself a prophetess, and she teaches and seduces my servants to commit fornication." These doctrines are the depths of Satan.

For in the Old Testament that term 'fornication' is used of those who worship the demons, or worship the idols, or worship the heathen Gods, a kind of religious fornication. Now, remember in the guilds, this was frequently what happened. Those feasts degenerated into this, and then of course all over the ancient world individuals were attached to the heathen temples, and fornication was one of the ways by which you worshiped a fertility god or goddess. And so, in order to worship truly it was said that one must have fornication with some of the temple prostitutes. So evidently all of this is involved in what is happening in Thyatira.

Now the God at Thyatira was Tyrimas or Tyrimnos. He was called by both, but he was simply an incarnation of the god Apollo. So, you would receive an invitation to the guild's festival, and it would read something like this, "Dine with us at the Temple of our Lord Tyrimnos." Now you can see a Christian involved in the guilds would be unable to answer an invitation like that. We couldn't come and dine with them at the table of the God Tyrimnos. No Christian could do that. But it was said, "Why not do that? After all, it's just a form." But no Christian, no true Christian, according to our Lord's teaching, could do that. You cannot under any circumstances sit down at a table in which the person to be honoured is a false god. A Christian cannot do that. His testimony is blighted immediately. And so, come dine with us at the table of our Lord Tyrimnos was an invitation that no Christian could accept.

2.2.5 Sardis

This is the first church of the seven to which the Lord does not give a commendation, does not give a word of praise. The letter to the church at Sardis follows next, in Revelation 3:1-6. Here, letter alluded to the seven manifestations of the Spirit and seven stars in Jesus' hand to remind the church at Sardis that Jesus had all power and authority. Letter drew attention to the authority of Jesus because his evaluation of this church was so severe. As we read in Revelation 3:1-3: You have a reputation of being alive, but you are dead. Wake up! Strengthen what remains and is about to die, for I have not found your deeds complete in the sight of my God... if you do not wake up, I will come like a thief (Revelation 3:1-3).

The city of Sardis had a reputation as a strong fortress, but on two occasions it had been captured by surprise. And Jesus warned that he would do something similar to the church in Sardis if they failed to repent. He would come as a thief, attacking them by surprise. But for those who remained faithful to him, Christ promised purity, vindication, and reward.

The city was a very difficult city to attack and overcome. At the center of it was a loft acropolis of about fifteen hundred feet high. The three sides of it were sheer cliff, a precipice that it was almost impossible for anyone to ascend. The southern side of the city was not of that type, but at least when one retreated into a place like that, it was very difficult to dislodge them.

Sardis lay about thirty miles to the southeast of Thyatira. It was a manufacturing city whose age of greatness lay in the past. Like city, like church. It was a church that claimed to have the truth, but the kind of life that it manifested, in one sense at least, denied its claims. In the 6th Century, before our Lord it was the greatest Persian city in Asia Minor. Croesus was the king of Sardis. Croesus was a king who had ambitions, like most kings did, and being a very wealthy man and head of a very important city, he decided that he would also reach out and try to enlarge his kingdom. And he did that by seeking to overthrow the Persian king Cyrus.

Sardis was a pagan city. Its chief religion was the worship of Cybil. But there's no mention of external conflict with the pagans or internal struggles with a Jezebel or the Nicolaitans. It was a church that enjoyed peace and prosperity. It was a church of what we might call "easygoing evangelicals," people who professed faith but fit very comfortably into the world.

2.2.6 Philadelphia

We see that here in Revelation 3:7-13 the sixth letter to the churches of Asia. It's the letter to the church in Philadelphia. The letter Jesus is revealed as the one who holds the key of David, meaning that Jesus can open the doors of David's kingdom to admit those he wishes, and lock the doors to keep others out. Jesus' words to this church were positive, but they also included an implicit warning.

In Revelation 3:8, he gave them this assurance: I have placed before you an open door that no one can shut. I know that you have little strength, yet you have kept my word and have not denied my name (Revelation 3:8). Christ had set before this church an open door, giving them an unobstructed opportunity to grow and develop spiritually. If they would take advantage of this open door, Christ would make their enemies bow down at their feet, and the Philadelphian believers would inherit the New Jerusalem. And God's name would be written on them, meaning that they would be his forever. But by implication, if they didn't take advantage of this opportunity, they wouldn't receive these blessings.

Philadelphia was a relatively new city. The newest of the cities where the seven churches were located. Philadelphia was a city thirty-five miles southeast of Sardis. It was founded in the second Century before our Lord during the reign of Attalus the Second of Pergamum. Pergamum was the capital of that general area. Sir William Ramsey, who spent a lifetime doing archaeological work in Asia Minor, said of Philadelphia that it was "the center for the diffusion of Greek language and Greek letters in a peaceful land and by peaceful means."

It was established to be a missionary center, to spread Greek language and culture to the backward highlands to the east in Asia. It was well located for doing that. It was located at the juncture of trade routes leading east to Mysia, Lydia, and Phrygia. And that location helped to earn it the name "gateway to the east" and made it a place of commerce and a place of some importance and prosperity. The city was built in an interesting area geographically. It was built on a volcanic plain, and that was to its advantage because the earth was very fertile and the people there were

able to grow grapes and produce a significant wine industry. But it was also a region that was subject to earthquakes. One occurred in AD 17 that leveled the city. The emperor Tiberias rebuilt it and he renamed it Neocaesarea. Later, the emperor Vespasian renamed it Flavia after the family name of that family of Caesar's. But the old name, Philadelphia, persisted and continued to be used through all of these attempts to change it.

It was a pagan city, as all seven cities were. The cult of Dionysus was the chief religion. Dionysus or Bacchus was the god of the vine and fertility, and so the rights of Bacchus, the parties that were thrown in celebration of that god often turned riotous and turned into orgies. So that was the environment which this church, this small church lived and actually thrived. Thrived in a pagan city, a very pagan environment, and yet it wasn't the pagans that caused this church difficulty. It was the Jewish population. That's very similar to the situation in Smyrna. Both churches were opposed by what the Lord calls a "synagogue of Satan." In fact, the letters to these two churches are very similar. These are the only churches for which the Lord has no criticism.

2.2.7 Laodicea

Next, we find letter to the church in Laodicea in Revelation 3:14-22. The letter describes Jesus as the one whose words are the ultimate Amen, that is, Jesus is the ultimate trustworthy authority. The letter also describes Jesus as the faithful and true witness, and the ruler of God's creation. This description was designed to make the Laodicean believers pay attention, because their evaluation would be very negative.

Listen to what Jesus said in Revelation 3:15-16: I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either one or the other! So, because you are lukewarm — neither hot nor cold — I am about to spit you out of my mouth (Revelation 3:15-16).

Laodicea was a town that was named by the wife or for the wife of Attalus the Second, who founded the city. His wife's name was Laodicy, and so Laodicea is derived from her name. It was a wealthy city located between the cities of Colossae and Hierapolis. Laodicea was 50 miles southeast of Philadelphia. Between it were its two sister cities, Hierapolis, six miles to the north, and Colossae 10 miles to the south. Both Colossae and Hierapolis were well known for having special water supplies. Colossae had cool waters from mountain springs; Hierapolis had hot springs. Both of these waters were thought to have healing powers. But the water in Laodicea was lukewarm, without any healing powers. Jesus drew from these physical realities to make a spiritual point: the Laodicean church was wealthy, but their wealth had taken away their spiritual strength. This church needed to repent, or Jesus would reject them.

It was located at the convergence of three important roads, so it became a center of banking and industry, and one of the richest commercial centers in the world. This was a very impressive and rich city. Much of its wealth came from the production of a specific wool that was glossy, black in color, and soft in texture. It was very popular in making clothing. The city was also the location of a major medical school that was well-known for its manufacture of ear ointment and eye salve. It was important financially because of its location, because of its wealth. And evidence of its wealth is seen in the fact that when it suffered a severe earthquake which damaged much of the city in AD 60, it was able to finance its own rebuilding without assistance from the imperial treasury. It was self-sufficient. It was materially comfortable and self-satisfied, just like the church at Sardis, which was really dead. But at Sardis, there were a few believers who were faithful, while the entire Laodicean church was completely complacent.

2.3 CONCLUSION

The Book of Revelation addresses seven letters to seven churches in Asia Minor (modern-day Turkey) (Revelation 2-3). Each letter, as proclaimed by Jesus and recorded by John the Apostle, declares the triumphs and failings of the recipient churches and warns each congregation to repent. The advice in these letters is prophetic, forewarning present-day Christian communities of the snares that can lure us away from our faith.

The Seven Churches of Revelation are ancient churches that St John wrote about in the Bible. Each church received a letter calling them to repent for their sins and correct their current course. When the letters to the churches were sent, there were active Christian communities in each of the towns. Today, though some remnants of these ancient cities and their churches remain, others have merged with the modern Turkish cities that now dot the landscape.

According to legend, the 7 churches were all on a well-worn trade route, each church received a specific message, to be delivered to the congregation. The first church was located at Ephesus, the first stop along the trade route, followed by Smyrna, now Izmir, then the great city of Pergamon, then Thyatira, wealthy Sardis, Philadelphia and finally Laodicea, near modern-day Denizli. The messages were distributed in order, allowing them to circulate throughout the Christian community of the age. The letters were intended to correct the ills of the churches in each city and are still a point of interest and pilgrimage for Christian communities today.

CHAPTER III

Things are Alright in Heaven [Creation and Creator]



3.1 INTRODUCTION

In Revelation chapters 4 and 5, what we have is picture of our Lord Jesus Christ as the supervisor of human affairs generally. Not simply head of the church, but the head over all of human affairs. As he himself claimed before he ascended to the right hand of the father, "all power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Revelation 4:1:11 describes a scene in God's heavenly throne room, and resembles similar visions in Ezekiel 1, Isaiah 6, and other Old Testament passages. God was sitting on his throne, and was being worshiped by heavenly creatures — including four that John described in some detail. Each of the four was covered with eyes and had six wings. But they had different overall appearances: one resembled a lion, another an ox, another a man, and another an eagle. They probably represented all the creatures of the earth giving praise to God.

John's vision also showed twenty-four elders surrounding God's throne, probably numbered according to the twelve tribes of Old Testament Israel and the twelve New Testament apostles. These elders symbolized the people of God throughout history. Whenever the four creatures praised God, the elders bowed down, acknowledging his majesty and authority, and promised him their submission, obedience, and reverence. Beyond the elders was a myriad of angels that extended the praise of God outward, and also praised the Lamb of God. This scene also contains many images from the Old Testament descriptions of the tabernacle and temple: lamps were blazing before the throne; incense depicted the prayers of God's people; there was a glass sea, more perfect than the bronze one in the Old Testament; and there were songs of praise like those offered by Levitical singers. This symbolism indicated that John was given a view of God's heavenly throne room, from which he rules over the entire universe and renders his judgments. And this told John's readers that the vision dealt with matters of great importance. The heavenly vision continued in Revelation 5:1-14. God held a scroll in his right hand, representing his plan for the destiny of the world. But none of the members of his court could open the scroll. In other words, none of them could accomplish his plan. Then one of the elders told John that the Lion of the tribe of Judah would open the seven seals and read the scroll.

Revelation [in chapters 4 and 5] is an instructive text for consideration as we seek to gain greater fluency in Scripture's primary trinitarian discourse and things are alright in Heaven. Revelation 4-5 presents all three persons of the Trinity. It presents the Trinity as the agent of creation, redemption, and consummation. And it presents well-ordered, indeed normative, worship of the triune God. It presents its teaching on the Trinity in a manner with which we are less likely to be familiar. It does not use the standard terminology of "Father" and "Son" and "Holy Spirit" to identify the three persons of the Trinity. It does not say, "Jesus is Lord." Instead, it presents its teaching on the Trinity in the highly figurative language of apocalyptic literature: there is the throne, there is the Lamb, there are the seven Spirits of God. But it is precisely this factor that makes Revelation 4-5 so instructive regarding the character of the Bible's primary trinitarian discourse. It awakens us from the slumbers of our familiar miscomprehension of biblical language and forces us to pay attention more closely to the actual shape of the Bible's trinitarian discourse. In opening the door to God's heavenly court, Revelation 4-5 opens the door to the chorus of heavenly creatures and redeemed saints who have learned, in the Spirit, and by virtue of the triumph of the Lamb, to praise with perfect eloquence the name of the Holy Trinity. In order that we may appreciate more fully how Revelation 4-5 conveys God's transcendent, triune identity, let us look at the specific ways it names the three persons of the Trinity. Let us consider, first, the one who sits on the throne, second, the Lamb who stands in the midst of the throne and, third, the Spirit who is before the throne, the Spirit of God and of the Lamb.

3.2 GOD IS ON THE THRONE - ALL OF HISTORY

The throne of God is a major subject of the book of Revelation. In fact, the word “throne” occurs over 40 times in the book. And that’s the first thing that John sees. What does any of this have to do with divine naming in Revelation 4-5? In John’s vision, he sees and hears various things regarding the triune God, which he reports to us. Revelation 4-5 identifies God by means of definite descriptions, as the “one seated on the throne” (Revelation 4:2), by means of proper names and titles, as “the Lord God Almighty” (Revelation 4:8), and by means of indicators, as the one “who was and is and is to come” (Revelation 4:8). Moreover, Revelation 4-5 predicates certain actions of God. The heavenly host declares, “you created all things, and by your will they exist and were created” (Revelation 4:8). Finally, Revelation 4-5 reports various acts with reference to God: “Holy, holy, holy,” the four living creatures proclaim day and night (Revelation 4:8). And, because he is the supreme benefactor of all creaturely being and wellbeing, God is acknowledged as “Worthy . . . to receive glory and honor and power” (Revelation 4:11).

John’s heavenly vision of God in Revelation 4-5 may be described as a vision of “monarchical monotheism,” a vision in which “God is seen as presiding over the heavenly court, in the celebration of the heavenly liturgy. “At once,” John says, “I was in the Spirit, and behold, a throne stood in heaven, with one seated on the throne” (Revelation 4:2). John’s description of the visible glory of the one seated on the throne is notably reticent in comparison to the visions upon which he draws in Isaiah 6, Ezekiel 1, and Daniel 7 to articulate what he sees: “he who sat there had the appearance of jasper and carnelian” (Revelation 4:3). The one seated on the throne is encircled by three concentric circles “made up of first a rainbow, then a circle of the four cherubim,” whose job it is to lead the heavenly liturgy, “then a circle of the twenty-four thrones upon which the twenty-four elders sit” (Revelation 4:3, 5, 6-8). From the throne “flashes of lightning,” “rumblings and peals of thunder” come forth, redolent of the Lord’s theophanic appearance at Mount Sinai (Revelation 4:5). Also before the throne are “seven torches of fire,” which are identified as “the seven Spirits of God” (Revelation 4:5), and “a sea of glass, like crystal” (Revelation 4:6).

As the one who is seated on his heavenly throne, he is portrayed as supreme above all creation. As the one whose throne is encircled by a rainbow, the four living creatures, and the twenty-four elders, he is portrayed as the center of all creation. And, to recall an earlier identification of God in Revelation 1:8, as the one who is “the Alpha and Omega,” he is portrayed as the beginning and the end of all creation. According to John’s vision, the one who sits upon the throne is not distinguished from creatures as the member of a broader class of creatures. John’s vision names God as supremely transcendent and supremely unique. The one who sits upon the throne is the transcendent Lord above all, the transcendent center of all, the transcendent beginning and end of all.

As John’s vision proceeds from sight to sound, the various hymns of the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders further confirm the transcendent uniqueness of God. “Day and night,” John tells us, the four living creatures “never cease to say, ‘Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come’” (Revelation 4:8). Here God is praised by his proper name and title, “the Lord God Almighty,” a Greek way of representing the Hebrew proper name and title, “YHWH of hosts.” Unlike other names and titles which are commonly ascribed to both God and creatures in Holy Scripture, this name and title is never ascribed to any creature. It is only ever ascribed to God alone. God is further praised by means of an expanded version of his self-identification in Exodus 3:14. He is “the one who was and is and is to come,” a name called upon especially in circumstances where God’s people suffer the mismatch between present realities and promised blessings, circumstances much like those of the seven churches which Jesus has addressed in the preceding chapters. This manner of naming God indicates God’s eternal and unchanging being,

which is the ground of God's faithfulness to his people and to his covenant promises throughout all the changes of history. Identifying God by his proper name and title, and by his eternal and unchanging being, the heavenly creatures honor God as thrice-holy, an acclamation also reserved for God alone throughout Scripture, acknowledging that he is "set apart" from all creatures in his transcendent being, beauty, and worth.

According to John, the singing of the Trisagion by the four living creatures prompts the twenty-four elders to prostrate themselves before "him who is seated on the throne" and to worship "him who lives forever and ever" (Revelation 4:9-10). Their worship consists in a second-person acclamation of God's worthiness. "Worthy are you, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they exist and were created" (Revelation 4:11). Speaking now not of him but to him, the heavenly creatures acknowledge God's absolute right to receive glory and honor and power. This right is rooted in his work of creation and providence. As the sole benefactor of the world's coming to be and continuing to be, he alone is worthy of such praise. As all things are from him, so all praise is due him (2 Chronicle 29:11).

Worship, Revelation is keen to emphasize, as an evaluative stance and activity, is to be rendered to God alone because he alone and his actions alone make him alone worthy. Though John is tempted on more than one occasion to worship one of the glorious heavenly envoys he runs into in the course of his vision, he is repeatedly rebuked and ordered to "Worship God" (Revelation 19:10; 22:9).

3.3 JESUS IS IN CHARGE – THE LAMB WHO STANDS IN THE MIDEST OF THE THRONE

Revelation chapter five begins with John's sight of a scroll in the right hand of him who is seated on the throne (Revelation 5:1). This scroll, which is "written within and on the back" and "sealed with seven seals," in all likelihood represents God's hidden purpose for the world that he has made and that he providentially governs. John then hears "a mighty angel" who asks "with a loud voice" the question, "Who is worthy to open the scroll and break its seals?" (Revelation 5:2). Who is able to understand God's sovereign purpose for creation? Who is able to bring God's sovereign purpose into effect? The response causes John to "weep loudly" (Revelation 5:4). "No one in heaven or on earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll or to look into it" (Revelation 5:3).

John then hears one of the twenty-four elders proclaim the good news: "Weep no more; behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has conquered, so that he can open the scroll and its seven seals" (Revelation 5:5). After hearing these glad tidings, John then sees "in the midst of the throne . . . a Lamb standing, as though it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent out into all the earth" (Revelation 5:6). In light of the previous determination in verse 5, this is quite an identification. The one who is not among the creatures that may be found in heaven, on earth, or under the earth is nevertheless identified by the most creaturely of creaturely descriptions, by a biographical description that is bracketed by "womb and tomb." He is the Lion, born of the tribe of Judah. He is the Lamb who was slain. This one is not a member of that category. He too is identified by means of his transcendent oneness.

After the Lamb had taken the scroll from God's right hand, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders again fall down in worship, this time "before the Lamb" (Revelation 5:8). In offering their worship, they hold not only harps but also "golden bowls of incense, which are the prayers of the saints" (Revelation 5:8). The Lamb who has the seven horns, signifying divine power, and the seven eyes, signifying divine knowledge (Revelation 5:6), stands ready and able to receive the prayers of his suffering people, ready and able to respond to their pleas for

deliverance. And so the heavenly creatures sing a “new song,” again a “second-person acclamation,” echoing themes from the first exodus, to celebrate the second exodus effected by the Lion and the Lamb in his death, resurrection, and ascension to God’s right hand: “Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation, and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth” (Revelation 5:9-10). Again note the sheer marvel of what is predicated of the one who stands in the midst of the throne. By means of the events of his very human biography, the Lamb has effected a uniquely divine act of redemption, ransoming God’s people by his blood, making them a kingdom of priests to God. And because of his uniquely divine act of redemption, he is regarded by the heavenly chorus as worthy of the worship that is due to God alone.

John then sees and hears “the voice of many angels, numbering myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands” joining the heavenly chorus of the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders (Revelation 5:11), “saying with a loud voice, ‘Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing’” (Revelation 5:12). As the one who sits on the throne has been acknowledged as worthy because of his work of creation and providence, receiving the threefold acclamation of “glory and honor and power” (Revelation 4:11), now the lamb who is in the midst of the throne is acknowledged as worthy because of his work of redemption to receive the sevenfold acclamation of “power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing” (Revelation 5:12).

Perhaps because the sevenfold praise of the Lamb corresponds to his work of “completing” or “perfecting” God’s purpose for creation, the expanding chorus of praise then extends from “heaven” to include “every creature . . . on earth and under the earth and in the sea, and all that is in them” (Revelation 5:13). This time God and the Lamb are hymned together, and this time by means of a doxology: “To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever” (Revelation 5:13). This doxology is met, in turn, with the “Amen!” of the four living creatures, which prompts the twenty-four elders, once again, to fall down and worship (Revelation 5:14).

To summarize the preceding discussion, according to Revelation 5, the one who stands in the midst of the throne is not numbered among God’s creatures in heaven or on earth or under the earth. He is identified by his transcendent oneness. Nevertheless, this transcendent one has a human biography, being born of the tribe of Judah, having suffered a violent death. Moreover, by his means of the events of his human biography, this one has effected divine redemption on behalf of his people, ransoming them by his blood and making them a kingdom of priests to God, thereby completing and perfecting God’s purpose for creation, as he alone is qualified to do. For this reason, the one who stands in the midst of the throne receives glory and honor from all creatures, not as “a second object of worship alongside God,” but as one who is “included in the worship due the one God.”

3.4 THE HOLY GHOST – THE SPIRIT WHO IS BEFORE THE THRONE

The focus of divine naming and divine hymning in Revelation 4-5 falls upon the first and second persons of the Trinity, on the one who sits on the throne and on the Lamb who stands in the midst of the throne. However, Revelation 4-5 is not silent when it comes to the third person of the Trinity, the Spirit who is before the throne. The ways these chapters name him therefore repays our careful attention as well.

The vision that Jesus “shows” John in Revelation 4-5 (Revelation 4:1) is a vision that John receives “in the Spirit” (Revelation 4:2). This is in keeping with the broader pattern of divine communication on display across Revelation as a whole. God has given to Jesus a revelation to

deliver to John (Revelation 1:1). This revelation, in turn, is received by John, and by the seven churches, by means of the Spirit's agency. All that John sees and all that John hears regarding the one who sits on the throne and regarding the Lamb who stands in the midst of the throne, and all that he passes on to the seven churches, comes about "in the Spirit."

"The testimony of Jesus" is given by "the Spirit of prophecy." And the Spirit of prophecy is clear: "Worship God" (Revelation 19:10), which according to Revelation 4-5 means, "Worship God and the Lamb." But what about the Spirit? Where does Revelation locate him, how is he identified, what is predicated of him, and how is his person evaluated?

The Spirit's location "before the throne" (Revelation 4:5) is admittedly an ambiguous identification. This location is also ascribed to creatures, such as the sea of glass (Revelation 4:6) as well as those who appear in God's presence for judgment (Revelation 20:12). However, among those who are located before the throne, he alone is described as "belonging" to the one who sits on the throne and to the one who stands in the midst of the throne (Revelation 4:5; 5:6). "The seven Spirits of God" in Revelation 4:5, taken along with the "seven horns" and the "seven eyes" in Revelation 5:6, is undoubtedly a reference to Zechariah 4:1-14. In the latter text, "the seven eyes of the Lord" are identified by the Lord as "my Spirit." The identity of the Spirit is therefore clear. The Spirit before the throne is the Spirit of the two who are on the throne. The Spirit before the throne is the Spirit who proceeds "from the throne of God and of the Lamb" (Revelation 22:1).

By identifying the Spirit with the "seven horns" and the "seven eyes" possessed by the Lamb, John further identifies the Spirit with God's transcendent power and God's transcendent knowledge, as one who is therefore able to bring God's creative and redemptive purpose, accomplished by Jesus, to its goal by empowering the prophecy, prayer, and praise of God's people in the midst of an idolatrous world. In the Spirit, the redemptive purpose of God for creation, the purpose unveiled and enacted by the Son, is brought to completion.

This identification is confirmed when we look more broadly at John's letter as a whole. In the opening salutation, John does not offer the typical dyadic Christian greeting, wishing grace and peace to the seven churches from God the Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ. Instead he offers a unique triadic greeting: "Grace to you and peace from him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven Spirits who are before his throne, and from Jesus Christ" (Revelation 1:4-5). In other words, John locates the Spirit, along with God and Jesus, on the divine side of the Creator-creature distinction, characterizing him as an agent of divine blessing. Moreover, in Jesus' address to the seven churches, the churches are repeatedly urged to "hear what the Spirit says to the churches" (Revelation 2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22). This is a noteworthy repetition. In enjoining the churches to listen to the Spirit of God, Revelation enjoins the churches to perform the first and fundamental act of worship they owe to the one true God: "Hear, O Israel . . ." (Deuteronomy 6:4).

With the one who sits on the throne, and with the Lamb who stands in the midst of the throne, John thus locates the Spirit who is before the throne on the divine side of the distinction between Creator and creature, as the source of all divine blessing, as one who is worthy of all divine honor. According to the revelation given by Jesus to John, we honor the third person of the Trinity by heeding the Spirit of prophecy, who enjoins and empowers us to render "blessing and honor and glory and power forever and ever . . . to him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb" (Revelation 5:13).

3.5 WORSHIP OF THE HOLY TRINITY – THE INDIVISIBLE, INTERNALLY ORDERED BEING AND AGENCY

Though Revelation 4-5 names the one who sits on the throne, the Lamb who stands in the midst of the throne, and the Spirit who is before the throne in three distinct ways, it does so without compromising scriptural monotheism, without suggesting the existence of three gods. Revelation 4-5 characterizes the Holy Trinity as indivisible and internally ordered in his being, agency, and worship. How so?

First, while Revelation 4-5 recognizes the presence of many thrones in heaven, the three persons of the Trinity share one throne. As we have seen, the throne of God symbolizes God's transcendent oneness, indicating his supremacy over all creatures, his centrality to all creatures, and his status as the beginning and end of all creatures. From this we may conclude that, although the three persons are distinguished by various means of identification and predication in Revelation 4-5, because they share one divine throne they share God's transcendent oneness. Moreover, the fact that both God and the Lamb share the seven Spirits of God also indicates their transcendent oneness.

Second, although Revelation 4-5 appropriates the work of creation and providence to the one who sits on the throne, the work of redemption to the Lamb who stands in the midst of the throne, and the work of sanctification to the Spirit who is before the throne, the identification of the three persons with these three distinct moments of God's unfolding kingdom should not be taken to suggest that they act serially within that unfolding kingdom: first the Father, then the Son, and finally the Spirit. For one thing, Revelation elsewhere ascribes the works of creation and consummation to the second person of the Trinity (Revelation 1:17; 3:14; 22:13). For another thing, Revelation elsewhere exhibits the Greek grammatical oddity of using a singular verb to describe the reign of God and of the Lamb, thus violating the basic rule of subject-verb agreement (Revelation 11:15; 22:3). From this we may conclude that the distinction between the first, second, and third persons of the Trinity in enacting the unfolding kingdom of God is not a distinction between three agencies. It is rather a distinction within one divine agency. The three persons who share one divine throne enact one divine agency.

Third, though Revelation 4-5 progresses from the worship of the one who sits on the throne to the worship of the Lamb who stands in the midst of the throne, these chapters conclude with the worship of the one who sits on the throne and of the Lamb. That this is the climactic expression of worship in Revelation 4-5 indicates that Revelation does not envision the worship of two or three gods. Instead it envisions the worship of one God in three persons. In the Spirit, Revelation calls us to worship God and the Lamb.

Fourth, though it does not receive the same degree of emphasis in these chapters as it does elsewhere in John's writings, Revelation 4-5 does indicate something about the character of the distinction that obtains between the three persons of the Trinity within the transcendent oneness of God's being and agency. According to these chapters, the revelation that John receives comes from God by Jesus in the Spirit. In similar fashion, God's hidden purpose for creation is accomplished by Jesus and applied by the Spirit sent out into all the earth. Here, as we have already seen, we are not dealing with a distinction between three divine agencies. We are dealing with distinctions within one divine agency. What is the character of that distinction? According to Revelation 4-5, the singular agency of God proceeds from the one who sits on the throne, through the Lamb who stands in the midst of the throne, in the Spirit who is before the throne.

3.6 CONCLUSION

In concluding our discussion of the Trinity in Revelation 4-5, I would like to return to the question of the relationship between scriptural trinitarianism and ecclesiastical trinitarianism. How does this text address that question?

Not only does Revelation 4-5 explicitly identify the three persons of the Trinity, it also explicitly mentions the three foundational moments of God's unfolding kingdom. It speaks of God's work of creation. It speaks of God's work of redemption. And it speaks of God's work of sanctification. Revelation 4-5's triadic pattern of identifying the three persons of the Trinity and of appropriating to them the three foundational moments of God's unfolding kingdom is later reflected in three article creeds such as the Apostles' Creed.

Revelation 4-5 also says something about the ultimate end of human beings, and indeed of all creatures, in relation to the Holy Trinity. According to Revelation 4-5, the revelation of the mystery of God's purpose for creation comes by means of the revelation of the mystery of the person and work of the Lamb. The revelation of this mystery, in turn, leads to the worship of God and the Lamb by means of the person and work of the Spirit who is sent out into all the earth. This suggests that God's ultimate purpose for all creatures in heaven and on earth, in the sea and all its depths, is that they would know and adore the Holy Trinity, with human beings ransomed from every tribe and language and people and nation leading the cosmic chorus as a kingdom of priests.

This suggests, in other words, that devoting our attention to the triune God as he presents himself to us in Holy Scripture is not a matter of vain curiosity or arcane interest. In seeking to gain fluency in praising God and the Lamb in the Spirit we are participating in what is the deepest reality of the cosmos, as well as its ultimate end. In doing so, we are also beginning to realize our nature as creatures designed to recognize, receive, and respond to the thrice-holy Trinity. To him be glory forever and ever. Amen.

CHAPTER IV

Things will get much Worse
before they get Better

[Big Trouble / Worse]



4.1 INTRODUCTION

The seven seals, seven trumpets, seven signs and seven last plagues [bowls] form an outline of prophetic events that will occur before and at the time of coming of Jesus Christ in clouds with great power and glory. Jesus' most comprehensive explanation of what will occur in the end times is found in His Olivet Discourse (also called the Olivet Prophecy) found in Matthew 24, Mark 13 and Luke 21. The setting for Jesus' teaching to His disciples is found in Matthew 24:3 (also in Mark 13:3 & Luke 21:7): "Now as He sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately, saying, 'Tell us, when will these things be? And what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?'" Then he told them the end time sign and his coming (Matthew 24, Mark 13 and Luke 21). However, he told them that except Father no one knows when that day and hour will come – neither the angels nor the Son (Matthew 24:36, Mark 13:32 and Luke 17:26:).

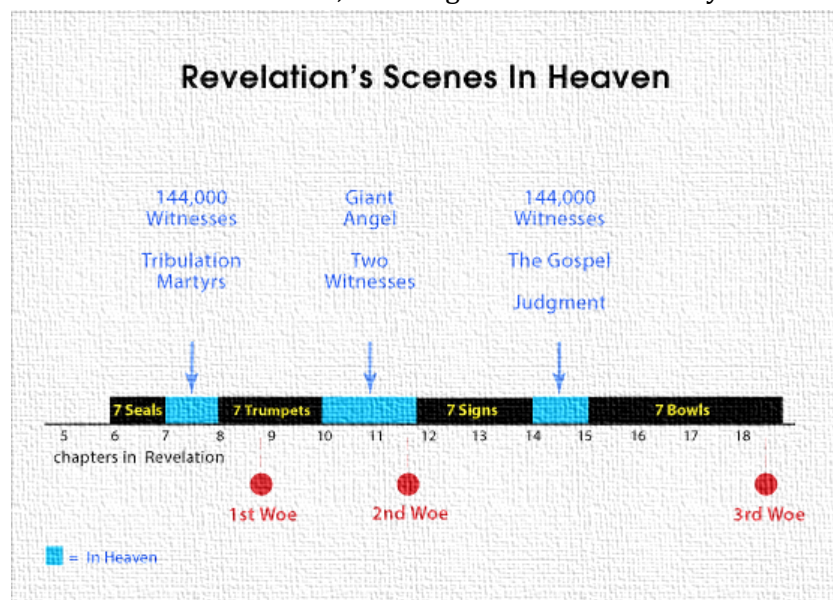
When a mighty angel announced in a loud voice about who is worthy to break the seals and open the scroll. When there was no one in heaven or on earth or in the world below who could open the scroll and look inside it. "And I wept much, because no man was found worthy to open and to read the book, neither to look thereon. And one of the elders saith unto me, Weep not: behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof" (Revelation 5:4-5).

The opening of vision tells us that Jesus Christ would be able to open those seals. Christ is the one who can show us all this revelation that has been sealed. He alone can do so. But what does it mean that He "prevailed to open the book"? It shows that loosing these mighty seals was not a simple matter. In order to reveal this prophecy, Christ had a titanic battle with Satan the devil, and He won. He qualified to replace Satan on his throne, and now He—and only He—is qualified to open those seals.

Since the book of Revelation focuses on end-time events, we can gain additional clarity on these events by noting what Jesus Christ said about these same events to His disciples when He was on earth. Each symbol is used to describe God's judgment upon sinful men and women of the earth for rejecting Christ. Each judgment

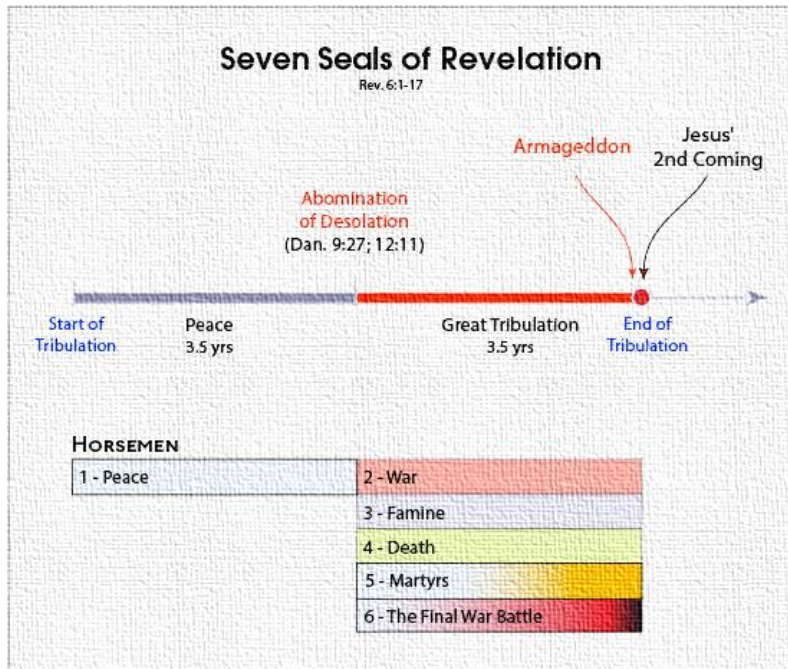
is progressively worse and culminates in the battle of Armageddon, the defeat of the world's armies. Each set of judgments are separated by a scene that occurs in heaven. The scenes in heaven describe God's presentation of the gospel to

the peoples of the earth and warning of eternal judgment. There are also three woes (Revelation 8:13; 9:12; 11:14; 18:10, 16, 19). The first two woes describe progressively worse demonic activity; the third woe, which is repeated three times, is about the battle of Armageddon. The chart below illustrates the sequence of these events in the book of Revelation.



4.2 THINGS WILL GET MUCH WORSE BEFORE THEY GET BETTER [BIG TROUBLE / WORSE]

The second part of the vision of the seven seals is the opening of the seals themselves in



Revelation 6:1–8:1. It presents the opening of six seals, followed by an interlude, and then the opening of the seventh seal. The first five of the seven seals represent Satan's wrath against God's people and mankind in general. The sixth seal announces the wrath of God (Revelation 6:12-16). The seventh seal represents the Day of the Lord—the major theme of the book of Revelation. This seventh seal includes God's judgment upon disobedient mankind in the form of seven trumpet plagues (Revelation 8-9) and seven last plagues (Revelation 15-16).

4.2.1 Seven Seals [Man Made Disasters]

The Seven Seals are the first set of judgments. The seals provide an overview of the terrors that will occur in the Tribulation period. The description of the Tribulation period begins in chapter 6 and ends in chapter 19. The first six seals are described in Revelation 6:1-17. The first seal describes peace which corresponds to the first 3.5 years of the tribulation (Daniel 9:27; 1 Thessalonians 5:2-3). The remaining seals describe the general punishments that will occur during the last part of the tribulation. The seventh seal is mentioned in Revelation 8:1, but it telescopes into the seven trumpets.

The first seal reveals false prophets; the second, war; the third, famine; the fourth, pestilence; the fifth, tribulation; the sixth, heavenly signs; and the seventh, seven trumpets. If you understand those seals, they lead you step by step to the return of Jesus Christ: He returns at the last of those seven final trumpet blasts. So, the Second Coming concludes those seven seals.

4.2.1.1 The First Seal [False Prophet]

The first seal Christ opens reveals the first horseman of the apocalypse. Seal 1: "...a white horse! And its rider had a bow, and a crown was given to him, and he came out conquering, and to conquer" (Revelation 6:2). The first seal allows the Antichrist to come into the world. As the white horse and crown symbolize, he promotes peace and is someone with power. However, the bow reveals that he is a wolf in sheep's clothing with the intent of deceiving and conquering the world. This first seal introduces the antichrist onto the scene as a rider of a white horse. This rider wears a crown and will deceive many with talks of peace, but he will wage war against the saints. The image of the white horse is similar to the one used to describe Jesus' second coming in Revelation 19:11-15. However, Jesus will come wielding a sword with the intent of bringing justice to the world not with a bow.

And when you see what this white horseman actually does, you realize that even though he looks like Christ, it isn't Christ at all! This is a false Christ who has deceived the world—the Christian world and the non-religious—about the prophecies of Revelation!

Note how our understanding of this seal is aided by comparing it to Jesus' earlier teaching. Without this comparison, one might wrongly assume that this horseman was Christ, since He is also pictured in Revelation 19:11 as returning on "a white horse." Christ unseals and explains this to us in Matthew 24. "And as he sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world [or age]?" (Matthew 24: 3). If you read through the chapter, you see that the main sign is the gospel being preached around the world (Matthew 24: 14). Christ was saying that His true gospel message would not be preached—but then, right before the end, it would be. That commission being completed would mark the world's entering into the very last end.

That was the main sign Christ gave, but there are others here. The very first thing Christ said was this: "Take heed that no man deceive you. For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many" (Matthew 24: 4-5).

This is what Christ revealed: It is the white horseman of religious deception. This horseman proclaims a lying message about Christ. This false religion proclaims that Christ was the Messiah, but it is deceiving people about what He said! This horseman comes first because he causes the most suffering by far. He is a false teacher of Christ's message, one who "went forth conquering, and to conquer." This deceitful ministry conquers by deceiving, and it has deceived the whole world (Revelation 12:9). This is the deadliest of all the horsemen.

Religious deception has been around for a long time. It began in the first century (Galatians 1:6; Jude 1:3-4) and will intensify prior to Christ's return via the efforts of a man identified in Scripture as "the man of sin," "the Antichrist" and "a beast" (2 Thessalonians 2:3; 1 John 2:18; Revelation 13:11).

4.2.1.2 The Second Seal [War]

Despite the promises of peace from the antichrist, warfare will break out after this seal breaks. A red rider on a horse slays a great number of people. Here is what Revelation says about the second seal: "And there went out another horse that was red: and power was given to him that sat thereon to take peace from the earth, and that they should kill one another: and there was given unto him a great sword" (Revelation 6:4). The second seal reveals the horseman of war. It marks the start of intense war on the earth. This war is worse than any war we have experienced so far. What did Christ say about this in the Olivet prophecy? This parallels Christ's explanation that people would "hear of wars and rumors of wars" and that "nation will rise against nation": see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet" (Matthew 24:6-7).

There will be all kinds of wars from the first coming of Christ to the Second Coming—but those right at the very end before His Second Coming will be about 100 times worse than any ever on this planet! That is what Christ is telling us. This is the same period that the Prophet Daniel called "the time of the end". It is the worst crisis ever on this Earth!

4.2.1.3 The Third Seal [Famine]

The third seal is described in Revelation 6:5-6): "And when he had opened the third seal, I heard the third beast say, Come and see. And I beheld, and lo a black horse; and he that sat on him had a pair of balances in his hand. And I heard a voice in the midst of the four beasts say, A measure of wheat for a penny, and three measures of barley for a penny; and see thou hurt not the oil and

the wine.” Seal number three reveals the horseman of famine. It depicts a famine on the earth and people working hard for little profit.

This was a graphic depiction of Christ’s teaching that “there will be famines” prior to His return (Matthew 24:7).

A rider on a black horse will spread famine throughout the earth. With whatever population is left on the earth from after the warfare, they will have to survive by bare means of food.

4.2.1.4 The Fourth Seal [Death due to Pestilence or disease epidemics]

“And I looked and behold a pale horse: and his name that sat on him was Death, and Hell,” or the grave, “followed with him. And power was given unto them over the fourth part of the earth, to kill with sword, and with hunger, and with death, and with the beasts of the earth” (Revelation 6: 7). The fourth of these seven seals is the horseman of death.

Christ’s prophecy in Matthew 24 goes on to explain the fourth seal. This description pictures the “pestilences” or disease epidemics Jesus said would come to earth’s inhabitants prior to His return (Matthew 24:7). “All these are the beginning of sorrows,” Christ warned (Matthew 24: 8). Death, riding upon a pale horse, wipes out one-fourth of the earth. The fourth seal will allow death to kill a fourth of the world’s population through war, famine, and wild animals.

The events pictured by the first four seals—religious deception, war, famine and pestilences—have already been occurring. Listed as signs of Christ’s second coming and “the beginning of sorrows” (Matthew 24:8), these frightening events will intensify at the time of the end.

These are the conditions and events Jesus Christ said to look for right before His return!

4.2.1.5 The Fifth Seal [The Great Tribulation – persecution & prayers of believers]

Revelation 6: 9-11 describe the next of these seven seals. This passage begins, “And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them, that were slain for the word of God ...” (Revelation 6:9). This is discussing God’s own people—people who knew God and the true gospel—being killed. This seal is describing the Great Tribulation, a 2½-year period of Satan’s great wrath (Revelation 12:12). This isn’t the time of the wrath of God—that one-year “Day of the Lord” comes right after the Tribulation, making a total of 3½ years of unprecedented suffering before Jesus Christ returns (Revelation 11:2-3; 13:5; Daniel 12:7).

“When He opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the testimony which they held. And they cried with a loud voice, saying, ‘How long, O Lord, holy and true, until You judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?’ Then a white robe was given to each of them; and it was said to them that they should rest a little while longer, until both the number of their fellow servants and their brethren, who would be killed as they were, was completed” (Revelation 6:9-11).

Notice how Christ describes this same prophetic event in Matthew 24:9: “Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name’s sake.” Christ aimed this directly at “you”—His own disciples. This is a world-shaking event!

The fifth seal shows all the people martyred for God asking when He will avenge them. He dresses them in white robes and promises to avenge them after the final people are martyred in His name.

4.2.1.6 The Sixth Seal [Heavenly Signs – Tremors & Terrors of unbelievers]

The sixth seal reveals mighty heavenly signs: “And I beheld when he had opened the sixth seal, and, lo, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood; And the stars of heaven fell unto the earth, even as a fig tree casteth her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind. Then the sky receded as a scroll when it is rolled up, and every mountain and island was moved out of its place” (Revelation 6:12-14). These signs are an indication of the fearsome things about to come next.

Christ explains this sixth seal in Matthew 24:29: “Immediately after the tribulation of those days [which was the fifth seal] shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken.” Those are the same heavenly signs. You can also read them prophesied in Joel 2:2; 2:31; 3:15-16: “The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and the terrible day of the Lord come.” This confirms that these signs mark the end of the Tribulation—the 2½ years of Satan’s wrath—and signal the beginning of the Day of the Lord—the year of God’s wrath.

As these awesome events transpire, mankind will realize that God will soon bring punishment upon earth’s inhabitants because of disobedience to His laws. “And the kings of the earth, the great men, the rich men, the commanders, the mighty men, every slave and every free man, hid themselves in the caves and in the rocks of the mountains, and said to the mountains and rocks, ‘Fall on us and hide us from the face of Him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb! For the great day of His wrath has come, and who is able to stand?’” (Revelation 6:15-17).

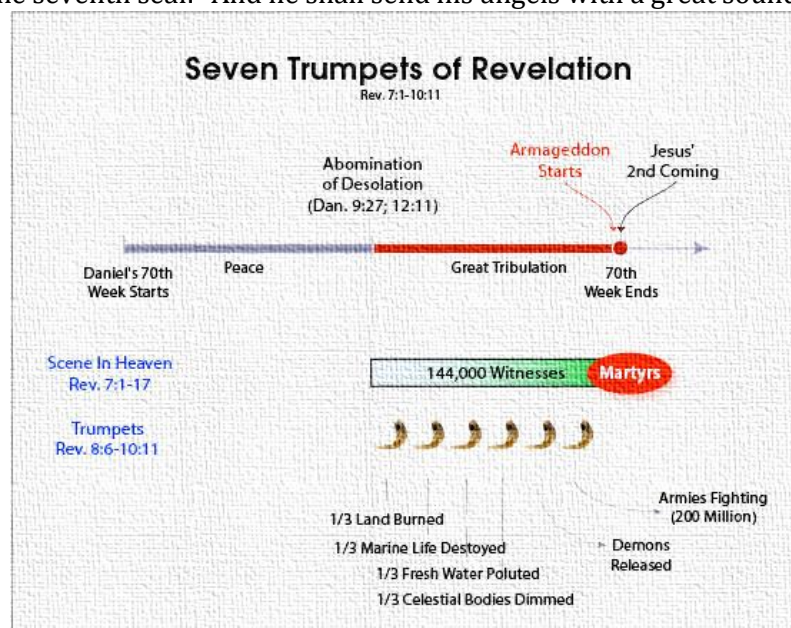
The sixth seal causes an intense earthquake that moves both mountains and islands. It also effects the sun, moon, and atmosphere. The people hide in caves from the wrath of God.

4.2.1.7 The Seventh Seal [The Seven Trumpets – Silence then Earthquake]

Revelation 6:17 introduces the seventh seal: “For the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?” That seventh seal is spoken of in Revelation 8 and 9. It consists of those seven trumpets.

Here is where Christ explained the seventh seal: “And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other” (Matthew 24:31). That seventh seal includes seven trumpet plagues that God pours out on mankind (Revelation 8). This seal, which is also called the Day of the Lord, is the predominant theme of the book of Revelation.

There are only a handful of scriptures about the Great Tribulation in Matthew 24 and Revelation, but there are over 30 about the Day of the Lord, which is the day of God’s wrath on this Earth. Joel says the Day of the Lord is at hand, as destruction from the Almighty. God is sick of mankind’s sin and lawlessness, which plunges us into the greatest crisis ever. The world



has never seen anything like the wrath of God that it is about to see! Yet sadly, throughout these plagues, mankind will refuse to repent.

The seventh seal represents both “the wrath of the Lamb” (Revelation 6:16), which Christ will bring upon mankind because of disobedience to God’s laws, and the mercy of God, which will eventually come through the return of Jesus Christ to this earth to establish the Kingdom of God. Prior to the beginning of the seventh seal, God is going to seal a group of 144,000 people (representing the 12 tribes of Israel) and a great multitude from all nations (Revelation 7:3-4, 9). God’s faithful people are thus going to be protected from the punishments soon to come upon the rest of mankind, people who are in rebellion against God. As the seventh seal begins, seven trumpets, representing a series of punishments, prepare to sound (Revelation 8:6). By the time of the fifth trumpet, the punishment will be so severe that “men will seek death and will not find it; they will desire to die, and death will flee from them [temporarily]” (Revelation 9:6). During the sixth trumpet, a third of mankind will be killed (Revelation 9:18).

The mercy of God soon follows when the seventh trumpet sounds to announce that “the kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ” (Revelation 11:15). Although there will still be “seven last plagues,” also called “bowls full of the wrath of God,” until “the wrath of God is complete” (Revelation 15:1 and 7), events on earth are now destined to improve. When Christ returns as King of Kings and Lord of Lords, the Kingdom of God will be established and 1,000 years of peace and prosperity will begin.

Silence fills heaven. Reminiscent of the Sabbath day of rest God took on the seventh day after creation, a brief pause occurs before the following judgements. The seventh seal contains the second series of God's judgments, the seven trumpets. These judgments are even worse than the first set as the end of the world draws nearer.

4.2.2 Seven Trumpets [Natural Disasters]

When the seventh seal was opened, John saw seven angels with seven trumpets. As each angel blew his trumpet, John saw terrifying plagues unfold, and he used powerful symbolic language to try to describe what he was witnessing. The vision of the seven trumpets consists of a series of angels blowing trumpets. Each time a trumpet is blown, another judgment falls on the earth. It's important to see that the vision of seven trumpets is structured in a similarly to the vision of the seven seals. The vision presents six trumpets, followed by an interlude, and then the seventh trumpet.

The first six trumpets occur in Revelation 8:1-9:21. The effects of the first six trumpets will include an ecological disaster of epic proportion. And as the planet struggles to support life, humans will have to endure such intense pain that they will desire to die (Revelation 9:6); and many will indeed die, as noted in the description of the sixth trumpet (Revelation 9:13-19).

The first four trumpet blasts in Revelation 8:2-13 signalled a series of specific judgments through the angelic armies on the four major regions of creation, and the last two trumpets describe the release of demonic forces upon the earth. These trumpets recall the trumpets in Old Testament prophetic passages like Hosea 5:8, Joel 2:1, Amos 2:2 and Zechariah 9:14. They're trumpets that sound when God comes with his angelic armies, calling the heavenly host to war against God's enemies.

4.2.2.1 The First Trumpet [Scorched Earth]

When the first trumpet was sounded, hail and fire mixed with blood was hurled on dry land. "... hail and fire, mixed with blood, and these were thrown upon the earth" (Revelation 8:7). The first trumpet sends hail and fiery blood to the earth, destroying one third of the trees and grasses on earth. This is similar to the seventh plague God brought upon Egypt (Exodus 9:13–35).

4.2.2.2 The Second Trumpet [Polluted Sea]

The second trumpet sounded and something like a huge mountain was thrown into the sea. "... a great mountain, burning with fire, was thrown into the sea, and a third of the sea became blood" (Revelation 8:8). The second trumpet sends a fiery mountain into the sea killing a third of sea life and destroying a third of the ships on the water. This is similar to the first plague God brought upon Egypt (Exodus 7:14–25).

4.2.2.3 The Third Trumpet [Contaminated Water]

The third trumpet sounded, and a blazing star was thrown into fresh water sources, making them bitter and undrinkable. "... a great star fell from heaven, blazing like a torch, and it fell on a third of the rivers and on the springs of water" (Revelation 8:10). The third trumpet sends a star named Wormwood to the earth. It poisons the water and makes it bitter, causing many people to die.

4.2.2.4 The Fourth Trumpet [Reduced Sunlight]

And with the sounding of the fourth trumpet, the sky was damaged; a third of the day and a third of the night were without light. "... a third of the sun was struck, and a third of the moon, and a third of the stars, so that a third of their light might be darkened, and a third of the day might be kept from shining, and likewise a third of the night" (Revelation 8:12). The fourth trumpet takes away a third of all light and makes part of both the day and night completely dark. But, as bad as these judgments were, only a third of each region was destroyed. At the end of this section, though, an eagle warned that even worse judgments were coming.

4.2.2.5 The Fifth Trumpet [Insect Plague]

The fifth trumpet blast is recorded in Revelation 9:1-12. It set in motion an army of unnatural locusts. "They were allowed to torment them for five months, but not to kill them, and their torment was like the torment of a scorpion when it stings someone" (Revelation 9:5). The fifth trumpet will send a fallen angel with a key to open the Abyss. From the Abyss will come an army of locusts led by a king named Abaddon. They will look like horses with human faces and women's hair, breastplates of iron, lions' teeth, and scorpion tails. For five months they will torment anyone who is not a believer with the seal of God on their foreheads. Some commentators believe this to be a description of a type of machinery such as helicopters or possibly a description of barbaric warriors, whereas others believe it to be a description of literal creatures from the pit of hell.

The first woe occurs in Revelation 8:13. The verse reads, Then I looked, and I heard an eagle flying in midheaven, saying with a loud voice, "Woe, woe, woe to those who dwell on the earth, because of the remaining blasts of the trumpet of the three angels who are about to sound!" (Revelation 8:13). Moreover, Revelation 9:12 tells us that the first woe is past. A review of Revelation 9:1-11 reveals that demonic forces were released from the bottomless pit (Luke 8:31; 1 Peter 3:19; 2 Peter 2:4; Jude 6) between Revelation 8:13 and Revelation 9:12. That is, the woe was about increased demonic activity upon the earth. The next "woe" is finished in Revelation 11:14. The final one occurs at the time of the battle of Armageddon.

4.2.2.6 The Sixth Trumpet [Oriental Invasion]

The sixth blast of a trumpet is recorded in Revelation 9:13-21. "So the four angels, who had been prepared for the hour, the day, the month, and the year, were released to kill a third of mankind" (Revelation 9:15). The sixth trumpet releases four fallen angels who had been bound at the Euphrates River in order to lead a great number of troops [200 million] into battle to kill a third of humanity. They ride horses and wear red, blue, and yellow breastplates symbolizing the plagues they inflict upon humanity: fire, smoke, and sulfur.

These first six trumpets are followed by a two-part interlude in Revelation 10:1–11:14. In a scenario that resembled God's revelation of judgment to Ezekiel in Ezekiel 2:9–3:9, John received a little scroll containing prophetic messages, and he was told to eat it. The scroll tasted as sweet as honey, probably representing the good news that God's plans for the world would be consummated without delay. But the scroll also turned his stomach sour, probably indicating that suffering would attend the consummation of God's plans.

The second woe is referenced in Revelation 11:14 and occurs at the end of the second scene. The verse reads, The second woe is past; behold, the third woe is coming quickly. Revelation 11:14 This second woe refers to the massive demonic activity described in Revelation 9:13-21.

The second part of the interlude records John's vision of two witnesses, but then they were slain by God's enemies. They performed miracles, called people to repentance, and warned of coming judgment. Even after these terrible judgments many people will not repent of their sins, but will continue living in their immorality. Just as the Egyptians' hearts were hardened when God used Moses to bring plagues upon Egypt, so will their hearts be hardened against God. Yet God continues to fight for the salvation of humanity. John's vision of the two witnesses highlighted the most fundamental conflict in history: the conflict between Jesus Christ and his enemies. The two witnesses were supremely powerful, but their opponents were extremely hostile and they murdered the witnesses. The beast will eventually kill them, but three days later God will resurrect them and take them up into heaven. It is after this that the seventh trumpet is sounded.

This stark contrast highlights the reality that there is no middle ground in the conflict between Jesus and his enemies. Every human being is either for Jesus or against Jesus. After the interlude, the seventh angel sounded the seventh trumpet in Revelation 11:15-19, closing this vision series.

4.2.2.7 The Seventh Trumpet [Kingdom Come]

Revelation 11:15 records this proclamation in heaven at the sounding of the seventh trumpet: "There were loud voices in heaven, saying 'The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever'" (Revelation 11:15). The seventh trumpet opens the temple of God in heaven and John sees the ark of the covenant. The people in heaven rejoice knowing that Jesus will soon conquer Satan and bring an end to the evil on earth, establishing His everlasting kingdom.

The seventh trumpet introduces the worship that will take place in God's throne room when his victory over all the kingdoms of earth is secure and when he renders his final judgment on all creation. Christ will return to renew the earth; his glory will be fully revealed; and God's reign will be fully manifested throughout all creation.

The sounding of the seventh trumpet signals the long-awaited arrival of the Kingdom of God on earth. This trumpet, which is also called the third "woe" (Revelation 9:12; 11:14), will be one of the most important announcements in human history. The establishment of the Kingdom of God on earth is the fulfillment of biblical prophecies recorded throughout the Bible.

In the interpretation of King Nebuchadnezzar's dream, God through the prophet Daniel revealed that eventually a kingdom would arise that would destroy all the human governments that preceded it. Most important, God said this kingdom "shall never be destroyed ... and it shall stand forever" (Daniel 2:44).

Years later, Daniel also had a dream in which God confirmed the coming of this eternal kingdom. In his vision Daniel saw "One like the Son of Man, coming with the clouds of heaven," who "was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him."

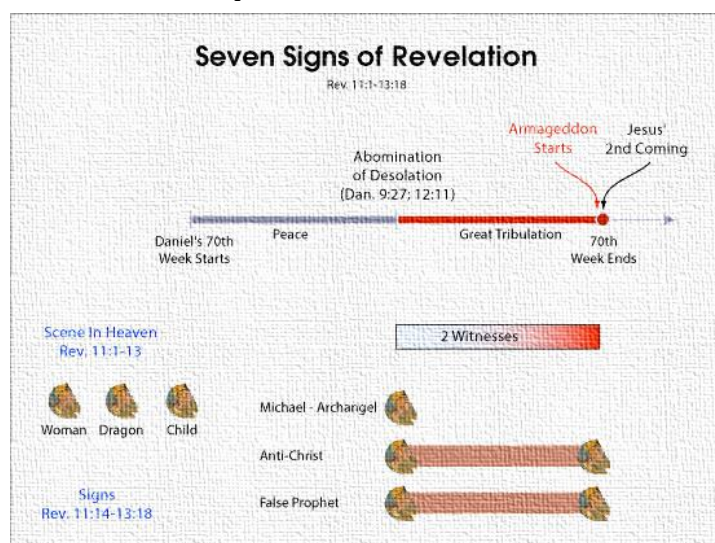
And again, Daniel noted that His dominion "shall not pass away, and His kingdom [is] the one which shall not be destroyed" (Daniel 7:13-14).

This seventh trumpet telescopes into seven signs, which lead the seven last plagues. But why does God need seven terrifying plagues to bring people to repentance? At the end of Revelation 9 is a prophecy of what will happen even after the first six destructive plagues have occurred. "But the rest of mankind, who were not killed by these plagues, did not repent of the works of their hands, that they should not worship demons, and idols of gold, silver, brass, stone, and wood, which can neither see nor hear nor walk. And they did not repent of their murders or their sorceries or their sexual immorality or their thefts" (Revelation 9:20-21). If one plague would wake everyone up, that's all God would use. But obviously it will take all seven trumpet plagues to finally bring this world to repentance. Satan has done his best since the time of Adam and Eve to inoculate humanity against feeling guilt for breaking God's laws. He has worked to convince people that God's laws are not valid, and to make repentance seem pointless, ridiculous or foolish. Because of mankind's disobedience to His holy and beneficial laws, God will bring this severe punishment upon earth's inhabitants. While one would think that such intense punishment would cause people to repent of their sins, this will not occur.

Humans are going to be so set on their freedom to break God's laws that they will be willing to die for their way of life rather than repent. What a truly sad state of deception Satan has perpetrated upon mankind (Revelation 12:9)! Because people will not repent, seven additional punishments called "the seven last plagues" (Revelation 15:1) will come upon mankind.

4.2.3 Seven Signs [Wonders]

The seventh trumpet occurs in Revelation 11:15 and telescopes into seven signs. It is commonly



believed that the seven trumpets telescope into the seven bowls, but a close examination of Revelation reveals that a sequence of seven signs follows the trumpets.

4.2.3.1 The First Sign [Woman]

Beginning in Revelation 12:1, the first sign is given to us. A great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars; and she was with child;

and she cried out, being in labor and in pain to give birth. Revelation 12:1-2.

4.2.3.2 The Second Sign [Dragon]

The second sign is a dragon in Revelation 12:3: “And there appeared another wonder in heaven; and behold a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads.”

4.2.3.3 The Third Sign [Male Child]

The third sign is a male child in Revelation 12:5-6: “And she brought forth a man child, who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron: and her child was caught up unto God, and to his throne. And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared of God, that they should feed her there a thousand two hundred and threescore days.”

4.2.3.4 The Fourth Sign [Michael Archangel]

The fourth sign is Michael the archangel (Revelation 12:7-17): “And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels,...And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.”

4.2.3.5 The Fifth Sign [Anti Christ]

The fifth sign is the antichrist (Revelation 13:1-10): “And I stood upon the sand of the sea, and saw a beast rise up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and upon his horns ten crowns, and upon his heads the name of blasphemy ... He that leadeth into captivity shall go into captivity: he that killeth with the sword must be killed with the sword. Here is the patience and the faith of the saints.”

4.2.3.6 The Sixth Sign [False Prophet]

sixth sign is the false prophet in Revelation 13:11-18): “And I beheld another beast coming up out of the earth; and he had two horns like a lamb, and he spake as a dragon ... Here is wisdom. Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast: for it is the number of a man; and his number is Six hundred threescore and six.”

4.2.3.7 The Seventh Sign [Telescopes into the seven bowls]

The seventh sign telescopes into the seven bowls, the last horrible plagues.

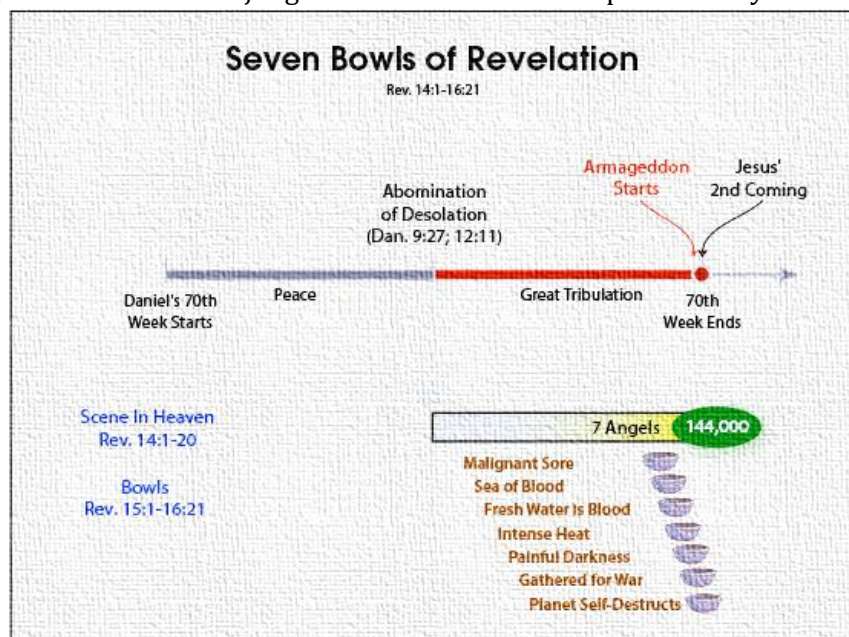
4.2.4 Seven Bowls [Unbearable Final Troubles]

The seventh sign telescopes into the seven bowls (Revelation 15:1, 7). The first six bowls occur in Revelation 15:1-19:21. They describe horrible plagues that occur on the planet, the universe, animals and human life. The final bowl is the battle of Armageddon.

The vision of the seven bowls presents seven angels that pour out seven golden bowls of God's wrath against the wicked. This vision follows the same structure as the visions of the seals, trumpets and histories: six bowls are followed by an interlude, and then the seventh bowl is poured out. And there are also other parallels worth noting. For instance, like the first four trumpets, the first four bowls devastated the four major regions of the world: dry land, sea, fresh water, and sky. But while the judgments of the trumpets affected only a third of the earth, the

bowls affected the entire world. Revelation 15:1, which is part of the vision of the seven bowls, we're told that when the seven bowls are poured, God's wrath will be finished.

The seven bowl or vial judgments are the final judgments of the tribulation period. They will be the most severe judgments the world has ever seen. The seven bowls are described in Revelation 16:1–21, where they are specifically called “the seven bowls of God’s wrath” (Revelation 16:1). Under the Antichrist, the wickedness of man has reached its peak, and it is met with God’s wrath against sin. The seven bowl judgments are called forth by the seventh trumpet.



Similarities between the trumpet and bowl

judgments have led some scholars to believe that they will take place simultaneously. Others teach that the two series will occur successively. The successive view is correct for the following reasons:

- First, there can be no overlap between the trumpet and bowl judgments because the latter will proceed from the seventh trumpet (Revelation 11:15).
- Second, the bowl judgments will affect the entire earth, but the first four trumpet judgments will affect only one-third of the earth.
- Third, the bowl judgments will occur near the end of the Great Tribulation (Revelation 15:1), but the trumpet judgments will begin at the midpoint of the Tribulation period.
- Fourth, the trumpet and bowl judgments will not follow in the same sequence. The first four will be poured upon nature and will affect mankind globally. The final three bowls will affect only the kingdom of the beast.

4.2.4.1 The First Bowl [Boils on Skin]

The first bowl inflicted a plague of painful sores on all those who had the mark of the beast and worshiped his image. When the first angel “poured out his bowl upon the earth...there fell a foul and painful sore upon the men who had the mark of the beast, and upon them who worshiped his image” (Revelation 16:2). The first bowl only affects those who have chosen to follow the Antichrist and not those who have chosen to follow God. The first angel poured out his bowl of poison on *the land* and ugly and painful sores broke out on everyone who had the mark of the beast, but the saints were not affected. When the wicked realized that their food supplies were the source of their boils, they rushed to the ocean to find food. Then Jesus said, “Neither shall the sea provide food for the wicked. Poison the oceans of the world!”

This plague could be anthrax, which causes boils on both people and animals. Israel is spared these sores because only people having the mark of the beast are afflicted. This event is similar to the plague of boils Moses brought against Egypt. *So they took soot from a kiln, and stood before*

Pharaoh; and Moses threw it toward the sky, and it became boils breaking out with sores on man and beast. (Exodus 9:10)

This judgment will involve a foul-smelling, malignant ulcer (like a boil) that is extremely painful and will not heal. It is similar to the sixth plague poured out upon Egypt (Exodus 9: 8-12). The plague will be limited to those who took the mark of the beast and worshiped his image. Their destiny is damnation in the Lake of Fire. But before that day of suffering, they will suffer from this judgment during the Great Tribulation (Revelation 14: 9-11).

4.2.4.2 The Second Bowl [Blood in Sea]

When the second angel poured out his bowl, “the sea...became like the blood of a dead man; and every living soul died in the sea” (Revelation 16:3). This refers to all saltwater seas. The text does not say that the sea became the blood of a dead man, but became like the blood of a dead man. The sea will turn into a thick, coagulated mass of blood producing a putrefying stench like that of a decaying corpse. This condition will cause unimaginable disease and death.

This judgment is similar to the first plague upon Egypt that God delivered through Moses. *Thus says the Lord, “By this you shall know that I am the Lord: behold, I will strike the water that is in the Nile with the staff that is in my hand, and it will be turned to blood (Exodus 7:17–21),* when all the fish died. It is also similar to the second trumpet judgment, when a fiery mountain will be cast into the sea, turning one-third of the sea to blood and killing one-third of the sea life (Revelation 8:8–9). A third of sea life has already been killed by the second trumpet. The second bowl kills the remaining life in the sea. All marine life will be destroyed, severely affecting the world’s food supply.

When the second angel will pour out his bowl upon the oceans, the water will turn into a thick blood-like fluid, like the blood of a dead man. Every living creature in the sea will die. The remaining of the sea creatures will float to the surface and wash onto the shores. Nothing from the sea could be eaten, but again, the saints will not be affected. God will provide food for them.

4.2.4.3 The Third Bowl [Blood from Spring]

The third bowl turned the fresh water of the rivers and springs [i.e. all sources of fresh water] to blood. When the third angel “poured out his bowl upon the rivers and fountains of waters...they became blood” (Revelation 16:4). This judgment will affect all of the world’s freshwater springs, rivers, and lakes. God has assigned various angels over the elements that He has created. In Revelation 16:5, He mentioned an “angel of the waters.” Other angels are over the wind (Revelation 7:1; Jeremiah 49:36; Zechariah 6:5), the abyss (Revelation 9:11), and fire (Revelation 14:15,18, 20; Joel 3:13). This judgment is similar to the third trumpet judgment, when a meteor will fall upon one-third of the freshwater, turning it to Wormwood. Many people who drink the water will die (Revelation 8:10-11). Like the Egyptians (Exodus 7:24), people in that day will dig for freshwater, only to find that it has turned to blood and is unfit for human consumption. Without water, people will go mad and stop at nothing to quench their thirst. We can only imagine the severe agony, panic, and health problems this will create.

The third angel poured his bowl of poison on the rivers and springs of water, and the springs of water became like blood, just like the oceans. Even more, the drinking water became poisonous for everyone who had participated in the murder of God’s people. The agony suffered by the murderers was intense. They were hungry and thirsty, and the agony they suffered was unbearable. After the third bowl was poured out, the wicked were in great anguish all over the world. The devil, who pompously masqueraded as Almighty God, could not prevent or cancel the effects of the first three bowls. To keep his masquerade intact, the devil stalled for time by promising to improve food supplies and the availability of fresh water, but his promises remained unfulfilled. To further divert the attention of the wicked from his failure to save them, Lucifer

directed the wicked to utterly destroy the remaining saints because, he claimed, they were aligned with "the devil." Lucifer cleverly led the wicked into thinking the saints were the reason for the great curse upon Earth and if the saints were eliminated, the curse would end. Immediately, the wicked agreed to kill the saints on a specific day (the 1,290th day of the Great Tribulation) and great rewards were promised to everyone who captured and killed one of God's saints. Instead, Jesus protected His saints. Not one single saint perished. Jesus said, "The wicked intended to kill my people, now let them feel the heat of my wrath."

Then comes a great angelic proclamation: "Thou art righteous, O LORD, who art, and wast, and shalt be, because thou hast judged thus" (Revelation 16:5). The angel declares that God is just in His judgment because the evil people of the earth have shed the blood of believers; they will now drink that blood. The martyrs under the altar are satisfied with this judgment. Remember the martyrs had cried out at the fifth seal: *they cried out with a loud voice, saying, "How long, O Lord, holy and true, will You refrain from judging and avenging our blood on those who dwell on the earth?"* (Revelation 6:10b) Martyrs respond with approval upon hearing that this judgement was in response to their being killed.

Often people question God's judgment upon them, but the angels do not. The angels confirm that an eternal God is justified in pouring out His wrath upon the ungodly. Further confirmation is made on this point by "another out of the altar say[ing], Even so, LORD God Almighty, true and righteous are thy judgments" (Revelation 16:7). The angel also affirmed that the wicked are worthy to have "blood to drink" because "they have shed the blood of saints and prophets" (Revelation 16:6; 7:14; 11:7–8). The *altar* in Revelation is often associated with the prayers of God's people, who are crying for vengeance and judgment on their persecutors.

4.2.4.4 The Fourth Bowl [Burning by Sun]

The fourth angel "poured out his bowl upon the sun, and power was given unto him to scorch men with fire" (Revelation 16:8). The fourth bowl causes the sun to burn people with its fierce heat and they curse God, but still do not repent and give God glory. This judgment is similar to the fourth trumpet, yet quite different. Under the fourth trumpet, one-third of the sun will be darkened (Revelation 8:12). The sun will become so hot that it will scorch people [earth] with unbearable and intense heat; it is likely that natural protections in the atmosphere will have been destroyed. The stench rising from the dead sea creatures was so unbearable that no one wanted to go outdoors, but the situation indoors was worse. There was no water or electricity. Objects became so hot that people were badly burned by merely touching them. Millions of wicked people, exhausted from their efforts to survive, died from hunger, thirst, and heat exhaustion. Even the devil's highest ranking officials had no food, water, or protection from the searing heat. Nevertheless, the wicked refused to repent of their wickedness and worship the Creator of Heaven and Earth, the only true God. They cursed the saints along with their God and refused to glorify Him.

The wicked cried out to Lucifer, "If you are Almighty God as you claim, stop these curses. Ever since you became king of kings and lord of lords (during the sixth trumpet), our condition has only become worse and worse. Use your miracle working powers to end the suffering! Show us again that you are Almighty God!" These requests put the devil in a predicament. He no longer had power to stop anything, including the effects of the first four bowls. People respond by cursing God. With hardened hearts these enemies of God are incapable of repenting. This type of hardening occurred in ancient Egypt—when the Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart (Exodus 10:27).

Here the sun's intensity will be supernaturally increased by God, causing it to scorch people with fire. The scorching heat will not result in unbelievers crying out to God for mercy. They will

“[blaspheme] the name of God, who hath power over these plagues; and they [will repent] not to give him glory” (Revelation 16:9). Not even God’s wrath will produce repentance in the hardened hearts of wicked people.

4.2.4.5 The Fifth Bowl [Darkness]

The fifth bowl was poured out on the throne of the beast. From Revelation 13, it seems clear that this beast is the beast from the sea, whose rule was supported by the beast from the earth. This bowl plunged the beast’s kingdom into darkness, but its followers still cursed God and refused to repent. The fifth angel “poured out his bowl upon the throne of the beast, and his kingdom was full of darkness; and they gnawed their tongues for pain” (Revelation 16:10). The throne of the beast is the one spot where Satan’s power resides on earth. Up to this point, nothing will touch the throne of the beast, but now God will center on Satan’s earthly seat of power. This bowl judgment is similar to the fifth trumpet (Revelation 9:2) and the ninth plague upon Egypt (Exodus 10:21–23), with one exception: it will cover the entire earth. The darkness will be so thick that it will cause intense psychological pain to people already in agony because of their boils and burning flesh. This will cause them to “[gnaw] their tongues for pain.” This is a preview of the outer darkness of hell that unbelievers will suffer (Matthew 25:30). They will continue to “[blaspheme] the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, and [will repent] not of their deeds” (Revelation 16:11).

The fifth bowl covers the Antichrist’s kingdom in darkness. The darkness is so agonizing that the people gnaw their tongues in pain. However, they continue to curse God and not repent. LORD delivered a similar judgment against Egypt: *Then the Lord said to Moses, “Stretch out your hand toward the sky, that there may be darkness over the land of Egypt, even a darkness which may be felt.”* (Exodus 10:21)

The fifth plague, directed specifically at Lucifer’s government, stunned the remaining wicked. Suddenly, they began to question the identity of the glorious being who claimed to be Almighty God. Why would he give a curse of painful blindness to his officials and employees? Why would he destroy his entire work force and kingdom with painful blindness? Why would he treat his loyal followers with such horrifying contempt . . . unless he *really was* an imposter? Could he actually be the devil?

The fifth bowl will force the wicked to discover their true condition before God, the Creator of the universe. In an attempt to lessen the impact of this awful discovery, Lucifer will send miracle working demons to the ten kings of Earth during the sixth bowl. These demons will perform miracle after miracle before the kings of Earth and then, with sophisticated cunning, they will present their demonic proposal. They will tell the kings that Jesus will arrive soon to ultimately destroy the entire world. They will suggest to the kings of Earth that they must join forces with Lucifer to stop Jesus! They must make war on Jesus as He appears – the demons contend it is their only chance of survival.

Two interesting facts will emerge: First, the Bible predicts that Earth’s ten kings will join forces with Lucifer’s demons, even though they know that Lucifer is the devil and his angels are demons. Consider the ramifications of this union for a moment. To save self, sinners would rather join forces with the devil and attempt to destroy the Creator of the universe than to confess their sins and repent.

4.2.4.6 The Sixth Bowl [Armageddon]

When the sixth angel “poured out his bowl upon the great river, Euphrates...its water was dried up, that the way of the kings of the east might be prepared” to invade God’s Promised Land. (Revelation 16:12). The sixth bowl dries up the Euphrates river preparing a way for Satan, the

Antichrist, and the false prophet to deceive the remaining leaders of the world and prepare for the final battle against Jesus at a place called Armageddon. The river is called “great” because of its significant location. It is the longest river in Western Asia, flowing almost 1,800 miles from Syria to Babylon and emptying into the Persian Gulf. It forms a natural eastern boundary for the Roman Empire. The kings of the east will flood across the dried-up Euphrates River to take part in the battle of Armageddon. It may not take a supernatural event for the Euphrates River to become dry. Turkey has a dam that can stop the flow of the Euphrates; the Ataturk Dam dried this river while filling a large reservoir in 1990. Since then draught and water mismanagement have at times markedly reduced the flow of the Euphrates.

The vision in Revelation 16:13-16 is not a parenthetical section between the sixth and seventh bowls, as some teach. Rather, it provides needed insight into this gathering of nations for the battle of Armageddon. John saw “three unclean spirits, like frogs, come out of the mouth of the dragon...the beast, and...the false prophet” (Revelation 16:13). These demonic spirits will perform miracles that will entice all nations to bring their armies to Israel for “the battle of that great day of God Almighty” (Revelation 16:14).

Next, John's vision paused for an interlude in Revelation 16:15, where we read this announcement: Behold, I come like a thief! Blessed is he who stays awake and keeps his clothes with him, so that he may not go naked and be shamefully exposed (Revelation 16:15). This is the third of seven beatitudes in Revelation. It is also a warning for the saints living in the Tribulation to stay alert in light of Christ's soon return. The word *garments* is symbolic of the righteousness of the saints (Revelation 19:8). Those who are walking in sin before God (Revelation 3:18) and the world are considered to be spiritually naked. This is shameful at any time, but especially in light of Christ's soon return. Believers must guard their lives from evil at all times and be clothed in God's righteousness as they anticipate Christ's return. Recalling his letter to the church in Sardis in Revelation 3, Christ exhorted his followers to remain vigilant and faithful at all times.

According to Revelation 16:16, a decisive battle between the kings of the east and God's people would be fought at Armageddon or the Mount of Megiddo. In ancient Israel, Megiddo was a key city along a major trade route between the kingdoms of Mesopotamia and Egypt. Huge armies could assemble in the neighbouring Jezreel Valley, or as it's sometimes called, the Plain of Esdraelon. And God's people had previously achieved military victories in Megiddo. So, it was a fitting symbol to describe the climactic battle between God's servants and his enemies. Upon arrival these armies will attempt to destroy Jesus as he returns to earth. It will be an extra planetary event of unfathomable proportions. The battle of Har-Magedon is the final battle of this Age (Zechariah 14:2-9; Revelation 19:11-21).

The word *battle* does not mean a single conflict but a campaign of battles at the end of the Tribulation (Daniel 11:45). This will set the stage for a climactic conflict with Christ at His Second Coming. Why will all the nations gather at Mount Megiddo (Revelation 16:16)? They will come to challenge the Antichrist's worldwide dominion, which has begun to deteriorate, and to annihilate Israel. Mount Megiddo will be the staging area and focal point of the battle, but the conflict will extend for a radius of about 200 miles around Jerusalem (Revelation 14:20). While the nations are engaged in conflict, Christ will suddenly appear and destroy them with the sword of His mouth (Revelation 19:15).

The third woe is repeated three times in Revelation 18:10, 16 and 19. Revelation 18 describes the final aftermath that will occur on the earth which is the battle at Armageddon. Revelation 19 describes the second coming of Christ and a summary of the battle at Armageddon. The armies of the world will be defeated (Revelation 19:17-19), the antichrist and false prophet will be defeated (Revelation 19:20-21) and Satan and the demons will be put into the bottomless pit (Revelation 20:1-3). The seven bowls and the

third woe conclude the description of the Tribulation period in the book of Revelation (Revelation 6:1-19:19).

4.2.4.7 The Seventh Bowl [Universal Catastrophe]

After the interlude, the seventh bowl triggered the final destruction of the wicked. When the seventh angel “poured out his bowl into the air...there came a great voice out of the temple of heaven, from the throne, saying, It is done” (Revelation 16:17). What is done? The completion of God’s wrath being poured out prior to Christ’s Second Coming. Thunder and lightning rained down. An earthquake shattered the cities of the nations. Islands sank. Mountains crumbled. And giant hailstones crushed humanity. This was the end of the age — the destruction of the present world that will take place when Christ returns. The seventh bowl announces the end of the judgments on the world. There will be a great earthquake as the earth has never seen before. Jerusalem will split into three parts and the cities of the nations will fall. Mountains and islands will disappear and giant, hundred-pound hailstones will fall on people. The people curse God, but do not repent. This bowl has interesting parallels to the moment of Jesus’ death on the cross. In His final breath He says, “It is finished” (John 19:30) and the earth shakes and the veil in the temple is torn in two (Matthew 27:51).

After the final bowl has been poured out John is shown the fate of Babylon, then he sees “a white horse! The one sitting on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he judges and makes war” (Revelation 19:11). The one on the white horse is Jesus and He is coming to destroy Satan once and for all and to establish His kingdom on earth.

Immediately John heard “voices...thunders...lightnings; and...a great earthquake, such as was not since men were upon the earth” (Revelation 16:18). The great earthquake will affect the earth in four ways. First, the earth will convulse (Revelation 16:18) in an unprecedented magnitude, causing great damage, disruption, death, and distress upon mankind. Second, cities will be destroyed worldwide: “The great city [Jerusalem] was divided into three parts...cities of the nations fell; and great Babylon...[drank] the cup...of the fierceness of his [God’s] wrath” (Revelation 16:19). The “great city” seems to be a reference to Jerusalem’s destruction (Revelation 11:8). It is possible that the new areas outside the old city walls of Jerusalem will be divided by the earthquake at Christ’s return (Zechariah 14:4), but the old city itself seems to remain intact. People stand in awe at what mankind is able to create and construct, but one day it will all collapse and crumble when God pours out His wrath on the nations of the world. Third, continents will be severely changed by the earthquake as “every island fled away, and the mountains were not found” (Revelation 16:20). The earth’s topography will be radically altered during the earthquake, causing massive flooding and great destruction. Fourth, climatic changes will impact the earth as “there fell upon men a great hail out of heaven, every stone about the weight of a talent” (approximately 100 pounds) (Revelation 16: 21). The velocity of these stones peppering the earth will have a devastating impact on whatever is not destroyed by the preceding judgments. This judgment will be similar to the seventh plague upon Egypt (Exodus 9:23–24) and the first trumpet judgment (Revelation 8:7). The consequences of these cataclysmic changes will crush the Antichrist’s kingdom, but his followers will not repent. In fact, the opposite will take place: “men blasphemed God because of the hail” (Revelation 16: 21).

The series of seven bowls completed John’s vision of coming events. The seals, trumpets, signs and bowls all demonstrated God’s commitment to intervene in history to ensure the safety and blessing of his people. In John’s day, the Roman Empire seemed invulnerable to the churches of Asia Minor. And many modern enemies of the church can seem equally powerful. But God is determined to destroy his enemies and our enemies.

4.3 CONCLUSION

How does all this end? At the *last trumpet*, Jesus Christ Himself is going to return to this Earth! "The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord ..." (Revelation 11:15). Jesus Christ is about to take over this world in crisis, *rule* it with a rod of iron and bring *peace, joy, happiness* and *success* to *everybody* on Earth. That is the kind of prosperity mankind really wants, but has never been able to achieve. In Revelation 11:15, which is part of the vision of the seven trumpets, loud voices declare, "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he will reign forever and ever!"

If you are willing to look into God's Word with an open mind, you will see that all Christ talked about 2,000 years ago is coming to pass—the bad news *and* the good!

It is important to realize that throughout the tribulation period while God calls men and women to repent of their sins, the people will respond with anger against God rather than repentance (Revelation 9:20-21; 16:9-11).

The rest of mankind, who were not killed by these plagues, did not repent of the works of their hands, so as not to worship demons, and the idols of gold and of silver and of brass and of stone and of wood, which can neither see nor hear nor walk; and they did not repent of their murders nor of their sorceries nor of their immorality nor of their thefts. Revelation 9:20-21.

Men were scorched with fierce heat; and they blasphemed the name of God who has the power over these plagues, and they did not repent so as to give Him glory. Then the fifth angel poured out his bowl on the throne of the beast, and his kingdom became darkened; and they gnawed their tongues because of pain, and they blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores; and they did not repent of their deeds. Revelation 16:9-11.

Yet, some individuals will understand that they are sinners who have rejected God and that God's judgment is deserved. They will respond to God's call to repent and believe in Christ (Revelation 7:4-8). Sadly, most of the believers will die during the tribulation as martyrs.

When the Lamb broke the fifth seal, John saw underneath the altar the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God, and because of the testimony which they had maintained; and they cried out with a loud voice, saying, "How long, O Lord, holy and true, will You refrain from judging and avenging our blood on those who dwell on the earth?" And there was given to each of them a white robe; and they were told that they should rest for a little while longer, until the number of their fellow servants and their brethren who were to be killed even as they had been, would be completed also. Revelation 6:9-11.

After these things John looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could count, from every nation and all tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, and palm branches were in their hands; and they cry out with a loud voice, saying, "Salvation to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb." Revelation 7:9-10.

In the midst of judgment God will be calling men and women to repent and be saved. What about you? Have you become a believer in Jesus Christ?

CHAPTER V

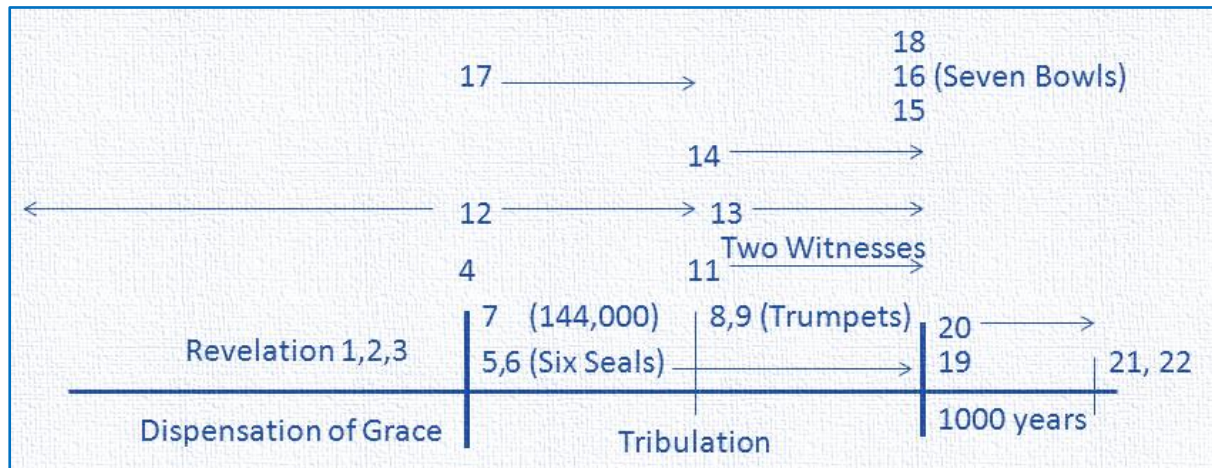
Things will get Much Better after
they get Worse



5.1 INTRODUCTION

At the *last trumpet*, Jesus Christ Himself is going to return to this Earth! "The kingdoms of this world will become the kingdoms of our Lord ..." (Revelation 11:15). Jesus Christ is about to take over this world in crisis, *rule* it with a rod of iron and bring *peace, joy, happiness* and *success to everybody* on Earth. That is the kind of prosperity mankind really wants, but has never been able to achieve.

The final section of the Book of Revelation [Chapter 19 - 22] gives a chronological explanation of the events that occur from the end of the Tribulation through eternity.



In the diagram, we see that the first section presents the events that will occur before the Tribulation. The second section gives a big picture perspective in chronological order of events that will occur from the beginning of the Tribulation until the end of the Tribulation. In our previous blog post we captured the major events articulated in Revelation 6 -18, which was the largest and most complicated of the sections in the Book of Revelation: the layered explanation of events during the Tribulation [i.e. The seven seals, seven trumpets, seven signs and seven last plagues (bowls) of prophetic events that will occur before and at the time of coming of Jesus Christ in clouds with great power and glory].

This final section of the Book of Revelation is actually the answer to the question "What is the Meaning of Life?" These four chapters that conclude the New Testament actually present a clear and simple answer to the Meaning of Life. However, most people do not read these four chapters by themselves. Most people read these four chapters after reading the thirteen most complicated chapters of this book [Revelation 6-18], and are too confused and / or mentally exhausted to comprehend the simple answer. Again, this is how the prophetic prophecies stated in the Bible will conclude. None of the prophetic prophecies in the Bible will remain unfulfilled. Can you explain how the Bible ended? Focus on these four chapters and you will not only know how the Bible ended, you will also find out the Meaning of Life.

5.2 RETURN OF CHRIST TO EARTH [THE FIRST RESURRECTION]

Revelation 19 talks about Christ's second coming and the defeat of all His enemies to establish His kingdom on the earth. In fact, we can divide the chapter into three parts. First: rejoicing over the coming kingdom in verses 1 through 6. Second: the invitation to enter the kingdom, which is called the Wedding Feast in verses 7 through 10. And thirdly: the coming of the kingdom and the coming of Christ in verses 11 through 21.

John hears a great multitude in heaven saying, "Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power belong to our God." This is the first place in the New Testament where the word "hallelujah" occurs. That's interesting because we're so familiar with the word, but it doesn't occur in the New Testament until we come here, and we read "hallelujah." It means "Praise Yahweh" or Praise Jehovah or Praise the Lord. In fact, the word occurs four times in this passage in verses 1 through 6 and only here in all of the New Testament. The sixth message in this series is recorded in Revelation in 19:1-8 and contains the exuberant praise of God's people in heaven. In response to the judgment against Babylon, God's faithful people praise him. And their praise continues as they recognize that the judgment against Babylon has cleared the way for the wedding between the Lamb, who is Christ, as his bride, the church.

Next, an interlude interrupts the messages in Revelation 19:9-10. In this interlude, John is commanded to write down a blessing for all those who participate in the wedding supper of the Lamb.

Lastly, this vision series concludes with the final battle between God and his enemies, reported in Revelation 19:11-21. Christ appears as the divine warrior and wages war against all the enemies of God. These enemies are led by the beast and the false prophet, which are, respectively, the beast from the sea and the beast from the earth from Revelation 13. And there is no contest; the beast and the false prophet are defeated forever. Listen to how Revelation 19:20 describes their downfall: The beast was captured, and with him the false prophet who had performed the miraculous signs on his behalf... The two of them were thrown alive into the fiery lake of burning sulfur (Revelation 19:20). The final battle concludes all the wars God has waged on behalf of his people, and completes the victory Christ won on the cross.

In His return, Jesus will appear in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory (the scene will be almost same as described in 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 by Apostle Paul). It says, "For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord". This will be the first resurrection.

The book of Revelation makes it clear: "Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ and shall reign with Him a thousand years" (Revelation 20:6). This verse is speaking of the resurrection of the just. It is speaking of the resurrection of the righteous. Those who take part in the first resurrection will appear with Christ, and it is then that they will receive the job that they will perform during the thousand years. The second death has no power over them, as once they have been resurrected, they will be immortal. There will be no more death for them! It goes on to say, "They shall be priests unto God and of Christ, and they shall reign with Him." They will not be as strangers, or pilgrims, or street walkers. They will reign! The word "reign" means to rule. They will rule with Christ for a thousand years!

5.3 REIGN OF CHRIST ON EARTH [1000 YEARS]

Now that we've explored the judgment on Babylon, let's examine the series dealing with the reign of the saints in Revelation 20:1-21:8. This series on the reign of the saints includes three parts, beginning with the thousand year reign of the saints, commonly called the millennium, in Revelation 20:1-10. In this section, John saw an angel descend from heaven and bind the great dragon, who is Satan. John saw that for the next thousand years, Satan would remain bound while the faithful Christian martyrs would come to life and reign with Christ. John also saw that after the thousand years, Satan would be released to gather the nations for the final battle against God, as described in Revelation 19. At the end of this battle, all God's enemies will have been permanently destroyed. Even Satan himself will be thrown into the lake of burning sulfur forever.

Most interpreters recognize that, like the rest of John's apocalyptic prophecy, Revelation 20 is highly symbolic. And believers interpret its symbols in a wide variety of ways. In fact, in the entire book of Revelation, it would be hard to find a more debated passage than this one. Broadly speaking, there are four major schools of interpretation for this passage. Each one is named in part after its understanding of the millennium or thousand years mentioned throughout this passage. These four schools of interpretation are: historic premillennialism, dispensational premillennialism, postmillennialism, and amillennialism. Historic premillennialism and dispensational premillennialism are both premillennial systems, meaning that they believe Jesus will return before the millennium starts. By contrast, postmillennialism and amillennialism are both postmillennial systems, meaning that they believe that Jesus will return after the millennium ends.

We agree that there is going to be a ruling and a reigning of the Lord Jesus Christ through his gospel in some way, whether it involves his personal presence immediately or eventually — that's a question we're not clear on — but we know that he is going to rule, he is going to reign, and it will be a manifestation of the power of the gospel. We know that he will judge and there will be a judgment of the sheep and the goats and there will be some who will be cast into eternal punishment because they do not have forgiveness of sin through him, and there will be others who will be called to enter into the glory that is prepared for them from before the foundation of the world. We know those things are true. We all agree on those things. We know that heaven is going to be a place where indwelleth righteousness and Christ himself will reign, and we will glory in him, and there will be no doubt as to the power and wonder of Jesus Christ. All of us agree on that. And we could go on with other truths about these last things, this eschatology as we call it from the word *eschaton*. And the number of things that we agree on because of the clarity of Revelation is really quite astounding. And as a result, we can all find great comfort and encouragement in the Bible's teaching about the millennium. The second part of the series on the reign of the saints deals with the last judgment on God's enemies, in Revelation 20:11-15.

The truth of Christ's reign on earth connects with some of the Bible's earliest statements. It is found in virtually all the Hebrew prophets. God's promise of His 1,000-year reign on earth stands as a symbol of hope for all mankind. The reign of the 1,000-year period of peace and righteousness following the next coming of Jesus Christ, who will reign over the earth forever and ever. It is the scriptural teaching of the 1,000-year reign of Jesus Christ on earth. The first explicit statements that the Kingdom of God will reign on earth for a thousand years appear toward the end of the Bible, in the book of Revelation. Revelation 19 describes the return of Jesus Christ, coming in glory and power to take over the kingdoms of this world and to institute a new, just reign here on earth (Revelation 19:11-16). He will put down rebellion, remove the last human empire ruling on earth and institute the reign of the government of God for the 1,000-year. Moreover, in Old Testament we also read of the impact the ruling Kingdom of God will have during the 1000 years in areas that include world peace, economic stability, the restoration of true education and right values, the role of the resurrected saints, the roles of various physical nations and even changes in the nature of animals. This is going to be a wonderful and exciting time—something we can eagerly look forward to.

5.4 RESURRECTION OF REST AND DAY OF JUDGEMENT [SECOND RESURRECTION]

In this part of his vision, John witnessed God rendering final judgment on all humanity, based on their works. This judgment included everyone who had ever lived. Believers, whose names were written in the book of life, were spared God's terrible wrath. But the rest of humanity was condemned for their sins. This aspect of the last judgment completely removed the presence and

effects of sin in the world, making way for the new heavens and the new earth. Finally, the third part of the series on the reign of the saints focuses on the last judgment for God's people, in Revelation 21:1-8.

In Revelation 3:5, Jesus extends three promises to every faithful believer. **First, He will grant Him white garments** (also in Isaiah 61:10 and II Corinthians 5:21). Roman officials customarily wore white clothing at religious festivals as symbols of high honour. White clothing that is given to the faithful represents not only honour but also purity and righteousness. This is a picture of the "righteousness of God" that is required for salvation. II Corinthians 5:21 tells us, "For he hath made him (Jesus Christ) to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." In other words, Jesus Christ traded places with us on the cross of Calvary. He took our sin upon himself in order that He might give us His righteousness. This is pictured in the Old Testament as a "garment of salvation" or a "robe of righteousness." Our righteousness based on our deeds are filthy rags according to Isaiah 64:6. "But we are all as unclean things, and all our righteousness are as filthy rags (Isaiah 64:6)." Isaiah also wrote, "I will greatly rejoice in the LORD; my soul shall exult in my God, for He has clothed me with the garments of salvation; He has covered me with the robe of righteousness" (Isaiah 61:10). Therefore, every believer (overcomer) shall be clothed in white raiment speaking of the righteousness of God (II Corinthians 5:21).

Second, Jesus will not blot the faithful believer's name out of the book of life. (also in Daniel 12:1; Luke 10:20 and Philippians 4:3) While some individuals think this statement implies that a believer may lose His salvation, it simply means the conqueror—the "overcomer" (1 John 5:4,5)—can be secure knowing their name will never be erased. Every born-again person has eternal life that will be His divinely given possession forever (John 5:24; 6:35–37, 6:39; 10:28–29; Romans 8:1). Does the idea of blotting out a name from the Book of Life imply **loss of salvation**? There is **the Book of Life** and then there is **the Lamb's Book of Life. These are different books.** The Book of Life is the book of physical life. The Lamb's Book of Life is the book of eternal life. When we are born the first time, God places our names in the Book of Life. When we are born the second time, God places us in the book of eternal life, a register and roll of all who shall inherit eternal life. When we die, God blots us out of the Book of Life. God never blots our names out of the Lamb's Book of life. In Exodus 32:31-33 we read, "Then Moses returned to the Lord and said, 'Oh, these people have committed a great sin, and have made for themselves a god of gold!' 'Yet now, if You will forgive their sin—but if not, I pray, blot me out of **Your book** which You have written.'" Moses asks God to kill him. He asks God to take him out of the book of physical life. On the day of Judgement, Jesus will physically blot out the life of those who do not gain victory in their spiritual lives. What does this passage mean by the idea that Jesus will "never" blot out his name from the Book of Life? It obviously does not mean that he can never lose his salvation for John clarifies that in other passages (John 5:24; 6:35-37, 39; 10:28-29; Romans 8:38-39). If we did not become Christians by good works, then we cannot become non-Christians by bad works. God bases our salvation on the finished work of Christ, not on our works. A person can never have security of eternal life by what he does; he can only have eternal security based on what Christ did. Remember, according to Revelation 3:5, if you believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, he will not blot your name out. What is the sin that can cause your name to be blotted out? It is unbelief. It is the rejection of Jesus Christ as Saviour. This is the unpardonable sin. (See John 3:36, 1 John 5:12). In John 3:18 we have this unpardonable sin given. "He that believeth on him is not condemned; but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God." A person living in unbelief is living in a condemned state already. If that person puts their trust in Jesus Christ as Saviour before they die, God promises in Revelation 3:5

that "...I will not blot out his name from the book of life..." If that person dies in unbelief, then at that point, God blots their name out of the book of life. The believer will be clothed with the righteousness of God, and his name will never be blotted out of the book of life. In other words, you can never be lost once you trust the Lord Jesus Christ as Saviour.

Third, Jesus will confess the believers' names before His Father and the angels. In a public ceremony in heaven, Jesus will acknowledge that these overcoming, enduring, faithful "conquerors" belong to Him. We are not told much about what is presently happening in heaven, but we are informed that "there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth. (Luke 15:10). I believe that what happens at the moment of salvation, according to Revelation 3:5, is that an announcement is made in heaven that you have trusted Christ, (as Jesus said, "before my Father; and before his angels"). (Revelation 3:5 and Luke 15:10) Evidently, great joy follows the announcement in Heaven. Moreover, in Matthew 10:32-33 and Luke 12:8-9 we read, I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels- Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven. Further in Revelation 13:8 and Revelation 17:8 we read, Revelation 13:8 says: "And all who dwell on the earth will worship [the beast], everyone whose name has not been written before the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb who was slain." Revelation 17:8 says: "The beast that you saw was, and is not, and is about to rise from the bottomless pit and go to destruction. And the dwellers on earth whose names have not been written in the book of life from the foundation of the world will marvel to see the beast, because it was and is not and is to come." On the Judgement day, whose name is not found written in the Lamb's book of life will be eternally separated from God, which is the second death.

5.5 THE SECOND DEATH [LAKE OF FIRE]

The first death is physical death, which is separation of the spirit from the body; the inner person from the outer. (James 2:26; Luke 23:46; 2 Corinthians 4:16-18; 5:4). Note that the "inner person", or spirit, does not cease to exist at death, but is described as being "unclothed" ... having no body. The spirit will receive a new body at the resurrection but continues to exist in a conscious state until then, longing for the new body which the Lord will prepare (1 Corinthians 15:50-53). The part of man that "sleeps" is the body, not the spirit. The spirit goes to God for judgment. Physical death is universal in its scope, and then comes the judgment (Hebrews 9:27; 2 Corinthians 5:10). The Sadducees of Jesus' day denied life after death and the resurrection. Jesus let them know that Abraham, Isaac and Jacob continued to exist after their physical deaths (Matthew 22:31,32). While **the first death is universal and cannot be avoided**, the good news is that the "second death" can be avoided, and in fact it ought to be made life's priority to do just that! Many would like to avoid the first as well, but, as they say, that horse is already out of the barn. However, in Jesus it can lose its' sting (1 Corinthians 15:54-58). But **the "second death" can be avoided, and again, it must be through Jesus.** We must ensure that the course of our life is leading us to avoid the second death. It's imperative. It's more important than anything. Everything good and all the potential for good hangs in the balance, and Jesus is the answer, and we need to take Him seriously.

The second death is defined later in Revelation 20: 14 & 21: 8 as the "lake of fire." It is the death of body and soul. Well, that is described, his doom, in Revelation 20: 10. The nations that followed

beast, Gog and Magog, are all destroyed. "And the devil who deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are also; and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever." And with that, the chapter on Satan is closed. What a story it was. There are lessons to be learned from it. From the accounts of Isaiah 14 and Ezekiel 28, he had a glorious beginning. He was Lucifer, the morning star. Ezekiel calls him the anointed cherub. He was in the very presence of God. He was blameless, Ezekiel says, until unrighteousness was found in him. His heart was lifted up in pride because of his beauty.

The second death is the judgment over everything that is tainted by sin. When someone has not used the opportunities in their life to overcome sin, they will be hurt by this second death, because nothing that cannot stand the fire of judgment will be allowed into eternity. For we who *have* used our opportunities while still here on this earth to **overcome** sin, we will not be hurt by that second death. We have recognized the sin that we are tempted to, judged it as unacceptable for one who wants to practice righteousness, and resisted it. We are an overcomer who live righteously and do what is good and true in every circumstance. And if we fall, we repent, are forgiven, and resolve to resist the temptation to sin the next time. We don't want to miss an opportunity! **The "second death" is the eternal separation from God. It is separation from His mercy, kindness and goodness. It is darkness and wailing. It is the complete loss of all good things. It is the opposite of eternal life** (Matthew 25:41;46). One only needs to see how the Scriptures describe the second death to understand the importance of the promise Jesus makes. We read of judgment and see the second death is also described as a "lake of fire" (Revelation 20:11-14). Let us avoid falling into that lake! Overcoming means that you and I will not be hurt by the second death! This is made possible by the grace of God made available through the atoning death of His Son. We also learn that Satan and His servants are there, not to rule as often depicted, but to also be punished consciously and eternally. (Revelation 20:10). It is so important to overcome in Christ! (Revelation 21:3-8). Now, I could put some effort into making the second death sound less threatening than the Scriptures of God describe it, but why would I? Many do just that. Lots of people appreciate a softer approach to judgment, at least for now. But I am certain such appreciation will vanish in eternity by all who, because of this, have neglected preparing for the judgment to come.

"Born Once - Die Twice or Born Twice- Die Once"?

If we are to overcome the evil one, it must be by our faith (1 John 2:13-17). We overcome by being buried and raised up with Christ (Romans 6:4,5; 8,9). Being raised with Christ from baptism is important. We are not ready for the second resurrection until we undergo this first, spiritual resurrection, rising from baptism to walk in newness of life. The book of Revelation figuratively describes this new life as a thousand-year reign with the Lord (Revelation 20:6). This spiritual resurrection is also called a "new birth". Jesus said one must be "born again" to see the kingdom of God (John 3:3-5). We are born again through our obedience to the truth (1 Peter 1:22,23). In this way, we overcome by faith. We must be "born of God" (1 John 5:4) and walk in our new life in Jesus. This is living each day by faith. This is the means to our victory bought by God's grace.

Paul said, "I can do all things through Him who strengthens me." Jesus has shown us the way. But this is not something to be casual about. Overcoming by faith means being steadfast, diligent and dedicated. It is to those who overcome that Jesus promises access to the tree of life and that the second death will not hurt them. It is more than worthwhile to endure giving up our own will, the works of the flesh that Paul speaks about in Galatians 5, in order to do God's will. The love, goodness, longsuffering, etc. that replaces our natural selfishness, envy, uncleanness, and so on,

are the results of living an overcoming life. These give us value that we will have for all eternity. There is grace for forgiveness of sins, but we also have grace for a much deeper life. Anytime an opportunity to overcome sin is missed we will be forgiven but have lost an opportunity to gain something of eternal value. That is the pain of the second death. That is an eternal loss. First Corinthians 15:41 talks about the glory of the sun, the moon, and the stars. This is symbolic of the eternal glory that we can come to. The more eternal value we have as a result of being faithful to overcome, the greater our eternal glory will be.

5.6 NEW HEAVEN AND NEW JERUSALEM [BRIDE]

John saw that the last judgment for God's people would be a great blessing. The heavens and earth would be remade, and a New Jerusalem would descend from heaven as the capital city of the new earth. **This reveals that in the new heavens and new earth, God will dwell among his people. God did this in the past in the Garden of Eden, in the tabernacle, and in the temple. And now he dwells with us in Christ.** But in the new heavens and new earth, our fellowship with God will be even greater, because he'll manifest his glory among us, and we'll live in his physical presence forever. What I love to emphasize here is the fact that we have a new heaven and a new earth, that when the Lord does come again and does bring everything to a close, we're going to not only have a new earth, but even heaven itself is going to be touched by a newness.

Let's move to his vision of the wife of the Lamb. This vision is recorded in Revelation 21:9–22:5. In his fourth vision, John was lifted onto a high mountain. According to Revelation 21:9, this vision concerned the bride, the wife of the Lamb, which was the New Jerusalem. This vision described the never-ending beauty, peace, health, prosperity and enjoyment that will exist after the world has been cleansed from the influence and presence of all God's enemies. And when John's original audience read about it, they would have been encouraged to pursue God's blessings by living according to its ideals, and looking forward to the fullness of salvation that will come when Christ returns.

The New Jerusalem is described in Revelation 21:9-27. It was prepared in heaven, and then brought to the new earth. The city was shaped as a perfect cube. In the Old Testament, the Most Holy Places in the tabernacle and the temple were also cubes. Correspondingly, just as God manifested his holy presence in the Most Holy Places, he'll reveal his glory to his people in the New Jerusalem.

Both the dimensions and descriptions of the New Jerusalem frequently mention the number twelve. In the Old Testament, this number is associated with the twelve tribes of Israel, representing God's people in that age. And in the New Testament, the number twelve is associated with the twelve apostles, representing God's people in the current age. This suggests that in the New Jerusalem, God's people are present in all their diversity and distinctive cultures.

Within the New Jerusalem, the river of life flowed from God's throne through the middle of the city. It nourished the tree of life, whose leaves brought healing to all the nations. This symbolized the fact that in the new earth, the curse of sin will be eradicated from creation. The entire world will be fully renewed and healed from all the conflicts with sin that have plagued fallen human throughout our history.

Finally, John saw that the New Jerusalem shone with the glory of God. The jewels and precious stones of the city reflected his richness, beauty and splendor. And beyond this, God's splendor filled the city, so that it didn't need other sources of light — including a sun or moon.

The question is, "Will the current heavens and earth be destroyed in order to make room for the new heaven and earth promised in Revelation 21?" Certainly, the new heavens and the new earth will be radically different than this heavens and earth that we're a part of now in that the curse will be removed, the effects of the Fall won't be here anymore.

5.7 CONCLUSION

Revelation is a timeless message from God to his people. Regardless of our perspective on the timings and fulfilments of John's visions, all Christians should agree that the book of Revelation is as relevant today as it was when John wrote it. Our circumstance may be different, but our God hasn't changed. And the values and perspectives John taught are still binding on us today. We can be encouraged by God's goodness in the past, present, and future. We can be confident in his love for us and his control over history. And we can respond to him in faith now and for the rest of our lives.

Throughout this lesson, we've seen that Revelation assures us of God's final victory, encourages our perseverance, and increases our longing for Christ's return. Our future blessing is certain. And it can give us comfort and determination when we're tempted or even persecuted. God never intended this book to divide Christians over our theological differences. He intended it to encourage every believer in every age to live in faithful obedience to him, and to hope in the glorious return of our Saviour Jesus Christ.

One of the scenes that we see concluding the book of Revelation is the emergence of the new city, the New Jerusalem, which comes to this earth. So, it comes to this terrestrial plane. And we also notice that one of the key images of this new reality is the tree of life, which is a clear reference back to the Garden of Eden in Genesis 1. **So, in one sense, creation begins in a garden, but in another sense, it's going to end in a city; but it seems to be connected some significant way.**

CHAPTER VI

The Seven Beatitudes in the Book of Revelation



THE SEVEN
BEATITUDES OF
REVELATION

6.1 INTRODUCTION

We all know the Eight, or even Nine Beatitudes of Jesus recorded in the Gospel of Matthew, recounted by Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount, and the Four Beatitudes followed by the Four Woes in the Gospel of Luke. But we are probably less familiar with the Seven Beatitudes that we find in the Book of Revelation. The beatitudes in Matthew and those in Revelation are both intended for those who endure hardship but those in Revelation seem a bit more hopeful and triumphant even. Jesus was talking to Jews who did not yet understand the kingdom (the church), while John was writing to Christians who were in the kingdom and needed the encouragement to remain faithful. These beatitudes might all be summarized by the first one in Revelation 1:3 — read it, hear it, keep it.

The word “blessed” does not mean happy as most people think it means. Jesus uses this same term in the beatitudes (Matthew 5; Luke 6). John uses this word seven times in Revelation (1:3; 14:13; 16:15; 19:9; 20:6; 22:7, 14). Twice, Paul uses “blessed” of God (1 Timothy 1:11; 6:15). “Blessed” carries the idea of a state of being fortunate or privileged, the recipient of God’s favour. Blessedness is the state that is neither made nor influenced by outside circumstances but is intrinsic within. This state comes from God, not man. Blessedness is not happiness because happiness depends on circumstances. These are people independent from the world and its allurements. They need nothing but God. They are not dependent upon outside circumstances. This quality belongs intrinsically to God. No one can make God blessed, so the people who are in the state of blessedness are souls satisfied from the source of God.

6.2 THE SEVEN BEATITUDES

The term beatitude comes from the *Latin* noun ‘*beatitudo*’ which means “blessedness”, “benediction”, “grace” or “bliss”. They echo the highest ideals of the teachings Jesus on mercy spirituality and compassion. Each beatitude is an almost direct contradiction of Society’s typical way of life. The best example of each trait is found in Jesus Himself. If our goal is to become like Him, the beatitudes will challenge the way we live each day. The beatitudes in the book of Revelation should be better known. They form a golden chain of glorious promises, which run through this wonderful book, and these could be a source of comfort and inspiration to all believers. Let us briefly sketch these Revelation beatitudes.

6.2.1 Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand. (Revelation 1:3).

All are blessed in reading, hearing and keeping the words of God. The book of Revelation is the only book of the sixty-six in the Bible that contains a declaration of a special blessing to the readers, hearers and keepers, thereby indicating the extraordinary importance of its contents.

The Revelation 1:3 pronounces a blessing on those “who [read] and those who hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written in it.” This verse is similar in form to the Beatitudes of Matthew 5:3-11, and in fact, it is the first of seven beatitudes in the book (Revelation 14:13; 16:15; 19:9; 20:6; 22:7, 14).

In James 1:22, the apostle admonishes us to be obedient doers, not just hearers, of the Word. One implication of James’ comment is clear: When it comes to prophecy, we are to obey the commands so often embedded in the prophetic word. James’ command to act, rather than just to hear, is frequently echoed in prophecy, as in Revelation 1:3: “Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written in it; for the time is near.”

The "and" in this verse is very important. God does not say that we are blessed simply if we hear and if we read. This is not to suggest that we should not study God's prophetic word; of course, we should. All Scripture is given for our edification and our inspiration (II Timothy 3:16). It is all inspired for that purpose. However, we are to read or hear and to keep.

What do we keep? Do we keep predictions about horsemen and beasts? How does one do that? What we are to keep are those commands that are liberally sprinkled throughout the word of prophecy—in the book of Revelation and in the prophetic sections of the gospels and epistles, as well as in the prophecies of the Old Testament. For instance, the letters to the seven churches in Revelation 2 and 3 contain several commands to repent and repeated commands to overcome. The prophetic word is not just a collection of mind puzzles that we are somehow supposed to unravel. God's prophecies are not that at all, but they are calls for change. They are calls for our growth. Remember, the blessing comes to those who keep, who do what God commands whether or not we understand the details of the prophecy.

Psalms 119:9-11 speaks of a wholeheartedness in which we hide God's Word in our heart that we might not turn away. When the book of Revelation was initially written, the Roman Emperor Domitian was persecuting the Church—*the hour was indeed near!* But whatever age we live in, as mortal men and women, we are but one breath away from the ultimate establishment of God's everlasting Kingdom. As Christians, God has offered us a head start, but we need a heart-set to match the revelation we have been granted.

In Luke 11:27-28 we read, And it came to pass, as he spake these things, a certain woman of the company lifted up her voice, and said unto him, Blessed is the womb that bare thee, and the paps which thou hast sucked. But he said, Yea rather, blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it. Matthew 7:21 says, Not everyone that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.

In John 14:23 we read, Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.

6.2.2 Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on. Yes, says the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours, and their works follow them (Revelation 14:13).

Works are very important to the book of Revelation—seven times in chapters 2 and 3, and four or five other times in the rest of the book. Christ's concern is that His people are working. The main purpose of the book of Revelation is not merely to give us insight into what is coming. It is also to convince the Christian that his loyalty, his devotion, his steadfastness, his suffering, and perhaps even martyrdom, is not in vain—that he is assured of a wonderful future. The reason for the stress on works is that character is not formed merely by knowing something but by knowledge combined with putting it to work until it becomes a habit. Over time, habit becomes character, and character follows the person right through the grave!

Hebrews 6:10-11 says, For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have shewed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister. And we desire that every one of you do shew the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end:

If we are not working, emphasizing loyalty to the Person of God and to His way, making every effort to overcome Satan, the world, and the self-centeredness within us. We are resisting with all of our being the temptations to do what is natural, carnal—if we are not expending our energy,

and spending our time working out our own salvation with fear and trembling. It is very likely, then, that we are not going to have the character necessary to go through the grave. The wrong works will follow us, and we will not be prepared for the Kingdom of God. Thus, what a person has done, that is, what he has worked on in this lifetime, follows him through the grave—either into the Lake of Fire or the Kingdom of God.

In 1 Corinthians 3:8-15 we read, Now he that planteth and he that watereth are one: and every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labour. For we are labourers together with God: ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building. According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon. For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.

The book is designed to focus attention on what is of greatest concern to Christ for His people. He wants to ensure that they do not give up or become weary due to the great pressure of the times, and that they instead endure, persevere, and be loyal and steadfast to the very end.

Hebrews 4:9-11 says, There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God. For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his. Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief.

6.2.3 Blessed is he who watches, and keeps his garments, lest he walk naked and they see his shame (Revelation 16:15).

To keep persistently awake is the message here. In John's day the Roman guard met with disgrace if found asleep. The inspector would remove the sleeper's cloak, leaving the man exposed to the jests and scoffs of his fellow guards. There should be no lack of alertness, no desire for ease and softness of situation. We must be always vigilant lest we succumb to spiritual drowsiness. The blessing is for the watchful.

Here is an explicit warning: that Christ will come as a thief. In the midst of disaster upon disaster and global war, some in God's church will be surprised by it. It seems ironic how that could happen, but it is apparently going to happen that way.

Here also is a conditional promise: Those who watch and keep their garments will be blessed.

Revelation 16 does not just reveal prophetic information about the future like some type of crystal ball. No, the prophecy is capped with a command to act: to "watch" and to "keep." Choosing not to remain vigilant, choosing not to guard our spiritual condition from atrophy, we can become complacent. We can become neglectful. Our obedience to the commands to watch and to keep is what is truly important to this particular scripture—not a full understanding of every nuance of this chapter.

In Zechariah 3:1-8 we read, And he shewed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the Lord, and Satan standing at his right hand to resist him. And the Lord said unto Satan, The Lord rebuke thee, O Satan; even the Lord that hath chosen Jerusalem rebuke thee: is not this a brand plucked out of the fire? Now Joshua was clothed with filthy garments, and stood before the angel. And he answered and spake unto those that stood before him, saying, Take away the filthy garments from him. And unto him he said, Behold, I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee with change of raiment. And I said, Let them set a fair mitre upon his

head. So they set a fair mitre upon his head, and clothed him with garments. And the angel of the Lord stood by. And the angel of the Lord protested unto Joshua, saying, Thus saith the Lord of hosts; If thou wilt walk in my ways, and if thou wilt keep my charge, then thou shalt also judge my house, and shalt also keep my courts, and I will give thee places to walk among these that stand by. Hear now, O Joshua the high priest, thou, and thy fellows that sit before thee: for they are men wondered at: for, behold, I will bring forth my servant the Branch.

In fact, what God wants to see—and in fact, expects to see—is our obedience in faith to the commands of this passage notwithstanding our lack of understanding of the details. In this sense, the blessing promised in Revelation 16:15 comes in spite of our full understanding of this prophecy, or lack thereof. Knowledge is not a prerequisite to receiving the blessing. Obedience is. In Isaiah 61:10 we read, I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels.

We believe God's word of prophecy, though we may not always necessarily understand it. Nevertheless, God wants the prophecy to motivate us to obedience, and our obedience will bring a blessing with it. The Revelation 19:8 says, And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints.

6.2.4 Blessed are those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb! (Revelation 19:9).

What an honour and privilege! What unspeakable joy in having a part in that glorious event! The greatest chorus of praise this universe can provide will then be heard. "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him" (1 Corinthians. 2:9).

It will be one of eternity's supreme blessings to be called to this Marriage Supper. But who are these blessed ones? Who will be called to the Marriage Supper of the Lamb? Who will be there? Of course, God the Father and Jesus Christ will be there. They will be doing the inviting—the calling. God's angels, archangels, twenty-four elders, and four living creatures will all be there.

And it cannot be a wedding without a bride—the Bride of Christ will be there, collectively made up of the resurrected and changed members of God's true church from throughout the generations. But who will not be there? The church members who make up the five foolish virgins will not be there, because they will have not adequately prepared (Matthew 25:1-13). Satan and his demons will not be there. They will have been banned from even visiting heaven, as they had been able to do before (Revelation 12:8).

Moreover in Matthew 22:1-14 we read, And Jesus answered and spake unto them again by parables, and said, The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king, which made a marriage for his son, And sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding: and they would not come. Again, he sent forth other servants, saying, tell them which are bidden, Behold, I have prepared my dinner: my oxen and my fatlings are killed, and all things are ready: come unto the marriage. But they made light of it, and went their ways, one to his farm, another to his merchandise: And the remnant took his servants, and entreated them spitefully, and slew them. But when the king heard thereof, he was wroth: and he sent forth his armies, and destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city. Then saith he to his servants, the wedding is ready, but they which were bidden were not worthy. Go ye therefore into the highways, and as many as ye shall find, bid to the marriage. So those servants went out into the highways, and gathered together all as many as they found, both bad and good: and the wedding was furnished with guests. And when

the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment: And he saith unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment? And he was speechless. Then said the king to the servants, bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness, there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. For many are called, but few are chosen.

6.2.5 Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years" (Revelation 20:6).

Those in the first resurrection will reign and work with Christ through the Millennium as kings and priests. We can have a part in the first resurrection if we have been obedient and faithful to the Eternal with the help of the Holy Spirit imparted from God through Jesus Christ. In our duties as kings, we will have the power to correct many of the problems of society and lead the people in God's way of life. As priests of God, among other things like teaching and counselling, we will be responsible for offering sacrifices.

In 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 we read, For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.

The resurrection of the body is a blessed biblical truth, that is often overlooked or misunderstood. Man is a tripartite being, made up of spirit, soul and body. We are born dead in trespasses and sins... but our human spirit is resurrected... or made alive at the point of our salvation. However, throughout our entire Christian life, our soul is being made new, through a process of practical sanctification... as day by day our soul-life is gradually being conformed into the image and likeness of the Lord Jesus - as we grow in grace and mature in the faith. And one day we will be fully like Him... reflecting His beautiful, eternal, righteous life - in every way. But our bodies are also going to be changed, in the twinkling of an eye - at the last trump. The dead in Christ will be raised incorruptible and the living will be caught up together with them in the clouds. We are saved... spirit (at salvation), soul (through the process of sanctification) and body (at the resurrection/rapture). However, there are not three salvations - but one. When we are born again, we have God's assurance that we are saved spirit, soul and body. Our justification, sanctification and glorification is 'yes' and 'amen' - in Christ Jesus, our Saviour.

Although there is one salvation, which embraces us spirit, soul and body, the Bible mentions two resurrections' 1) the resurrection of the just and 2) the resurrection of the wicked. Both saved and unsaved men are resurrected... but their eternal destinies are very different. The destiny of the believer is eternal life, which was decided at the cross of Calvary by faith. But the destiny of the unsaved is finalised at the great white throne judgement seat... where the works of the wicked will be tried - and found wanting. The first resurrection identifies those that are 'blessed and holy', who are resurrected unto everlasting life. The second resurrection identifies the unsaved, who rejected God's offer of salvation, by grace through faith. They are raised unto shame and everlasting contempt and condemnation. There is no condemnation for those that are in Christ Jesus, but the result of unbelief is everlasting contempt and eternal condemnation - because they did not believe on the only begotten Son of God, for the forgiveness of sins and life everlasting.

The Bible also identifies two "deaths.' Every man experiences the first death, which is a physical death, but only those that are part of the second resurrection - the resurrection of the wicked, will experience the second death. It is unbelievers who did not trust in Christ for their salvation who are part of the second resurrection... and they will experience the second death. Jesus by His death

on cross destroyed the power of the second death over all who would believe on His name. Having shed His precious blood on our account He was resurrected from the dead, in a body of flesh and bone. Jesus was the first-fruit from the dead and all who trust in Him will partake in first resurrection, with a body of flesh and bone - and will not be hurt by the second death.

2 Timothy 2:12 says, If we suffer, we shall also reign with him: if we deny him, he also will deny us:

6.2.6 Blessed is he who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book (Revelation 22:7).

At the conclusion of the book of Revelation, John receives ratification of the certainty of Christ's coming – "These words are faithful and true." God is not in the business of bewildering believers. He is in the business of faithfully keeping His promises. He makes sure that John knows that His promises of prophecy have God's own veracity to back them. This is reminiscent of Isaiah 55:11: "So shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; it shall not return to Me void [margin: empty, without fruit], but it shall accomplish what I please, and it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it." When God speaks a prophecy, it will be fulfilled because He will bring it to pass! God's promises always depend on God's character. God Himself guarantees that we can believe the words of the book of Revelation. God's Word depends on God's character. God never goes back on His Word. God gives a special blessing for those who keep "the words of the prophecy of this book." More promises of blessing occur in this book than any other book of the Bible. This is the sixth declaration of blessing in Revelation. If we read, study and apply the book of Revelation to our lives, God assures us that He will bless us by it.

Let's read those blessed words of our Lord Jesus in Revelation 22:7, "Behold, I come quickly: blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book." Now let's read Revelation 1:3, "Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand." We see that the book of Revelation begins and ends with a promise of blessings to those who keep its words. The verse in question begins with such a wonderful promise to us, "Behold, I come quickly..." What joy, comfort, and strength these words give to the believer. Our saviour is coming again, and He is coming quickly! This is what the Apostle Paul calls the 'blessed hope' in Titus 2:13-14, "Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." When will the Lord return to take us to be with Himself in Glory? The Lord doesn't tell us, but we read in Romans 13:11, "And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed." The Lord's return is certainly nearer than it was yesterday and draws nearer with each passing day.

How is it that we 'keep' these words? The blessings that come from possessing the revealed truth of God's Word are not just from reading it, or from hearing it, although that is necessary. It comes from the fact that the truth is properly received, and causes an influence over the way we live our lives. We read of David's thoughts concerning the words of the Lord in Psalms 19:10-11, "More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb. Moreover, by them is thy servant warned: and in keeping of them there is great reward." So, we keep these words by acknowledging that they are the words of God and we seek to walk in the truth of what the Lord has given us in this book, as we should in each book. In James 1:23-24 we read, For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. The reading and keeping of these words will change our lives. In this book we see the culmination of all things. We see the Lord's final triumph over Satan and his being cast into the lake of fire for all eternity, along with all those who reject the Lord Jesus Christ as their saviour.

6.2.7 Blessed are those who do His commandments, that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter through the gates into the city (Revelation 22:14).

Our blessing does not derive from merely knowing the things of God, but from doing them (John 13:15; Revelation 12:17; 14:12). Jesus said that if we love Him, then we will keep His commandments (John 14:15; John 14:21-23). When we neglect to keep His commandments, we demonstrate our lack of love for Him. Our motivation to keep His commandments is also found in our desire to purify ourselves in preparation for His appearing (1 John 3:2-3). The power to keep His commandments is derived from the indwelling Holy Spirit (1 John 3:24). If we call him “Lord,” but do not keep His commandments, we are schizophrenic. How can He be Lord when we will not obey Him (Luke 6:46)? Worse than that, we are found to be liars concerning our relationship with Him: Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. He who says, “I know Him,” and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. (1 John 2:3-4)

Therefore, lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls. But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror; for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was. (James 1:21-24)

They may have the right to the tree of life: it will be the authority of them over the tree of life. The right to the tree of life is universal to all believers. We first heard of the tree of life in Genesis, where it appeared alongside the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Genesis 2:9). God forbade the couple to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, warning, “for in the day that you eat of it you will surely die” (Genesis 2:17). When the couple succumbed to temptation and ate of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, God said, “Behold, the man has become like one of us, knowing good and evil” (Genesis 3:22). To prevent the man from eating from the tree of life and living forever, God drove the man out of the garden and placed cherubim and a sword to prevent his return (Genesis 3:23-24).

Earlier in the book of Revelation, Jesus said, “To him who overcomes I will give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the Paradise of my God” (Revelation 2:7). Then, earlier in Chapter 22, John was revealed about the river of the water of life that flows through the New Jerusalem. He said, “On this side of the river and on that was the tree of life, bearing twelve kinds of fruits, yielding its fruit every month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations” (Revelation 22:2). Now we learn that, for those who obey God’s commandments (or “who wash their robes”), the curse of Genesis 3 has been removed—that God will restore their access to the tree of life.

Those who are born-again are the overcomers. Through the power of the Holy Spirit they will also be those who do the commands of the Lord. They are among the redeemed who are written in the Book of Life and therefore avoid the second death which is being cast into the Lake of Fire (Revelation 21:15). They have full access to the New Jerusalem whose gates are never closed (Revelation 21:24-26). All the redeemed have access through the gates. Access through the gates is equivalent with rights to the tree of life because the tree is within the city. To access the tree, one must first go through the gates.

6.3 OTHER SIMILAR BLESSINGS PROMISED FOR OVERCOMERS

Similar to the “blessed are those” types of beatitudes, there are also blessings promised to those who overcome. The first part of the book of Revelation was written to the seven churches of Asia and the author speaks of what happens as a result of faithfulness in the midst of distress.

6.3.1 Revelation 2:7 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him that overcomes will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the Paradise of My God.

6.3.2 Revelation 2:11 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. He who overcomes shall in no way be harmed by the second death.

6.3.3 Revelation 2:17 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes I will give to him some of the hidden manna to eat. And I will give him a white stone, and on the stone a new name written which no one knows except he who receives it.

6.3.4 Revelation 2:26 And he who overcomes, and he who keeps My works until the end, to him I will give authority over the nations.

6.3.5 Revelation 3:5 He who overcomes shall be clothed in white garments, and by no means shall I erase his name from the Book of Life; but I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels.

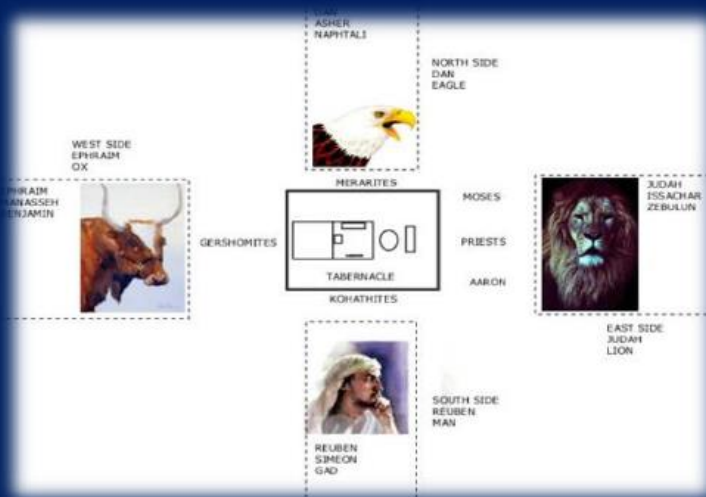
6.3.6 Revelation 3:12 He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and by no means shall he go out any longer. And I will write on him the name of My God and the name of the city of My God, the new Jerusalem, which comes down from heaven from My God. And My new name.

6.4 CONCLUSION

We all want to experience the blessings of God, but the question for us today is, “Are we the kind of people God blesses?” “Are we the blessed?” You see, God has innumerable blessings reserved for those who long for His word, remain faithful to His will, wait for His coming, and have their sins washed away in the blood of Christ. Do those things describe your life? If so, you’re blessed. But, if there is anything that needs to be changed, do it today. The blessings of God are too good to miss, and the alternative is too horrible to imagine.

CHAPTER VII

The Four Living Creatures in Heaven



7.1 BACKGROUND

The four living creatures are described in Revelation 4:6-9; 5:6-14; 6:1-8; 14:3; 15:7 and 19:4. They are said to be "full of eyes in front and behind" and had the face of a lion, an ox, a man, and an eagle in flight. They each have six wings and are always saying "holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come." These four living creatures closely resemble the four creatures described in Ezekiel 1:10 and Isaiah 6:2. It is not clear whether these passages are describing the same four living creatures, but it is very likely they are of the same exalted order of angels, whose main job is to worship God and speak His holiness (Revelation 19:4). In response to the worship of the four living creatures, the twenty-four elders cast their crowns before God's throne in agreement (Revelation 4:10-11). They exist to praise God forever before His throne, and they hold "golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints" (Revelation 5:6-14). This means that they hold the prayers of all believers throughout time, both the prayers of the past and those that will be prayed—a fragrant offering before God's throne (Revelation 8:3-4). This eternal fragrance was first symbolized by the incense burning in the tabernacle (Exodus 25:6).

One of the most interesting aspects of the four living creatures is that they demonstrate that Jesus, the Lamb of God, is equal to God Himself. Their worship of the Lamb in Revelation 5:6-14 is clearly directed towards Jesus Christ (Revelation 5:5; 9-10), and they say "Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honour and glory and blessing!" (Revelation 5:11-12) and "To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honour and glory and might forever and ever!" (Revelation 5:13) and they fall down and worship the Lamb, along with "him who sits on the throne" —God, the Father. Scripture makes it clear that "the Lord is God; there is no other besides him" (Deuteronomy 4:35; 1 Kings 8:60). God spoke through Isaiah, saying, "I am the Lord, and there is no other, besides me there is no God" (Isaiah 45:5-6) and Jesus Christ also responded to the Pharisees' question about His identity by saying "before Abraham was, I am" (John 8:58). Based on their subsequent attempt to stone Jesus, we know that His statement "I am" was taken to mean "I am God" and the Pharisees took it as blasphemy. But the words and worship of the four living creatures make it clear that Jesus was telling the truth.



7.2 FOUR LIVING CREATURES IN THE BOOKS OF EZEKIEL

Ezekiel's vision of the four living creatures in [Ezekiel chapter 1](#) are identified as cherubim in [chapter 10](#) who are God's throne bearers. Cherubim as minor guardian deities of

temple or palace thresholds are known all over the Ancient East. Each of Ezekiel's cherubim have four faces, that of a man, a lion, a cherub, and an eagle. However, their human shape appearances set them apart from the griffin-like cherubs and lamassu of Babylonia and Assyria. In their ability to move, Ezekiel's cherubim do not need to turn, since they face all compass points simultaneously. This description of movement differs from the seraphim in Isaiah's vision ([Isaiah 6:2](#)) who have an extra set of wings for their ability to fly.

7.3 FOUR LIVING CREATURES IN THE BOOKS OF ISAIAH

[Isaiah 6:1-6](#) says: 'In the year that king Uzziah died I saw also the LORD sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. Above it stood the seraphims: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory. And the posts of the door moved at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke. Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts. Then flew one of the seraphims unto me, having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar.'

7.4 FOUR LIVING CREATURES IN THE BOOKS OF REVELATION

In Revelation 4:6–8, four living beings are seen in John's vision. They had the face of a lion, an ox, a man, and an eagle, and they rest not day and night, saying, "Holy, holy, holy, LORD God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come", much as in Ezekiel but in a different order. They have six wings, whereas Ezekiel's four living creatures are described as only having four. In verse 6, they are said to have "eyes all over, front and back", suggesting that they are alert and knowledgeable, that nothing escapes their notice. The description parallels the wheels that are beside the living creatures in Ezekiel 1.18; 10.12, which are said to be "full of eyes all around". The Hebrew word for "wheel" was also used in later Jewish literature to indicate a member of the angelic orders (1 Enoch 71.7; 3 Enoch 1.8; 7.1; 25.5-6, etc.). In this passage in Revelation, the four creatures surround "the one" on the red throne (which is of ruby and sardius), which is contrasted with the white throne in Daniel 7:9 and Revelation 20:11-15.

7.5 MEANING OF FOUR LIVING CREATURES

They had four faces: of a lion, an ox, a man, and an eagle. They seem to be representative of various parts of God's creation (the wild beasts, domesticated animals, humanity, and birds). These living creatures worship God continually. Significantly, each face belonged to a creature that embodies majesty, strength, and mightiness. The lion is a majestic wild animal, the bull an impressive domestic animal, the eagle a mighty bird, and man the crowning achievement of God's earthly creation, the ruler of all other creatures on earth.

7.5.1 Creature Like a Lion

In describing the four living creatures, John says that the first "beast" was like a LION. A LION is the "King of the beasts" and represents majesty. Thus, symbolising the kingship of Christ, and Christ is portrayed in the Gospel of Matthew as "King of Kings". Christ, as the promised son of David, received the authority to sit enthroned at God's right hand. Before him all crowns must be thrown down. He is the supreme King of kings and Lord of lords (1 Timothy 6:15, Acts 2:30-

36, Revelation 19:16). "The courageous man whose heart is like that of a lion." (2 Samuel 17:10; Proverbs 28:1) Based on such scriptures, the lion's face pictures courageous justice.

7.5.2 Creature Like a Calf / Ox

The Second living creature is said to be "like a calf". The word translated "calf" can also be translated as "bullock" or "heifer". This of course, was an animal frequently used for sacrifice. CHRIST here is portrayed as "Sacrifice" for our sins and symbolising the priesthood of Christ. He washed away our sins in his blood. Mark in his Gospel presents "CHRIST as the SERVANT who was to be sacrificed." Christ is the almighty King-Priest, who has made us kings and priests (Hebrews 8:1-2, Hebrews 9:24-28). "The power of a bull yields an abundant harvest." (Proverbs 14:4) Based on such scriptures, the bull's face, irresistible power. Throughout the book we see the labour of Jesus that Mark has recorded. There is no genealogy or record of Jesus' birth and early life but directly after baptism goes straight to work with the sick and hurting of the people. More than any of the other gospels, there is an emphasis on the message Jesus was trying to get out to the people. It is recorded he preached to the people the good news and that was the message of the servant or labourer for God.

7.5.3 Creature Like a Man

The Third living creature "had a face as a man", symbolising the humanity of Christ. The third creature would represent CHRIST as a MAN. The Gospel of Luke presents CHRIST as the Perfect Man. Also, as described in Philippians 2, Christ left His position of Glory with the Father and became a man so that He might die on the cross for our sin. Jesus Christ is Son of Man, one of us, born of woman, God made flesh, and he precedes us as the firstborn from the dead, yet remains close to us, knocking at our door, seeking to sup and abide with us (Revelation 3:20, Galatians 4:4, John 1:1,14). It must refer to a quality that could be portrayed, not by any animal, but by humans, who are made in God's image. (Genesis 1:27) That quality—on earth, unique to humans—is highlighted by God's commands: "You must love LORD your God with all your heart" and "you must love your fellow man as yourself." (Deuteronomy 6:5; Leviticus 19:18) When we obey these commands by showing unselfish love, we reflect God's own love. As the apostle John wrote, "we love, because he first loved us." (1 John 4:8, 19) Hence, "the face of a man" represents love.

7.5.4 Creature Like an Eagle

The fourth living creature was "like a flying EAGLE", symbolising the divinity of Christ. The eagle symbolizes Sovereignty and Supremacy. "An eagle flies upward," and "its eyes look far into the distance." (Job 39:27, 29) Based on such scriptures, the eagle's face, far-seeing wisdom. Thus, the living creature represents CHRIST in all his DEITY. The Apostle John in his Gospel presents JESUS CHRIST as the SON OF GOD and shows His relationship with heaven. Jesus was truly God from eternity, heavenly, and having risen from the dead and ascended on high, lives forever far above all things (John 1:1, 1John 5:20, 1Timothy 6:16, Revelation 19:11-16).

7.6 CONCLUSION

Notice that John does not describe these creatures except to liken them to something that someone would be familiar with, if they had read the book of Ezekiel. Especially notice the words "like" and "as" used in his account. John further describes the four creatures as having six wings each and being full of eyes within." While John could only describe the beasts by comparison, he is very precise in telling what they do", And they rest not day and night, saying, "**HOLY, HOLY, HOLY LORD GOD ALMIGHTY**, which was, and is, and is to come".

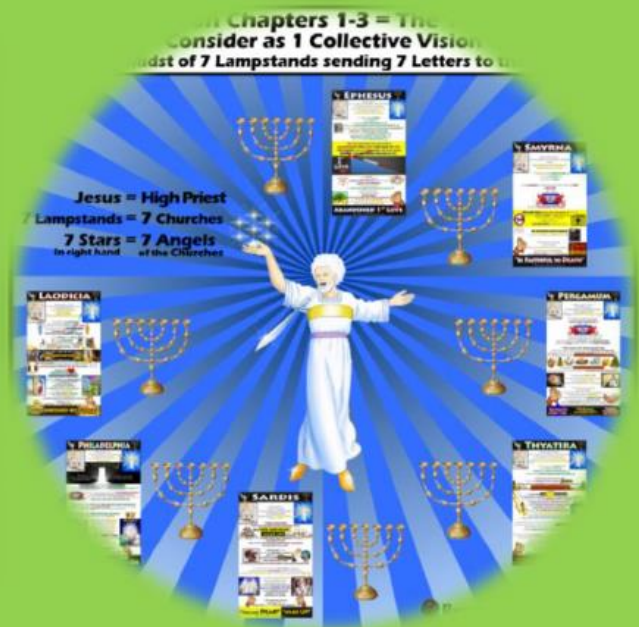
More specifically, all life created by God: humans, wild animals (lion), tame animals (ox), and birds (eagle). The creatures may represent four facets of Jesus. The lion, king of all beasts, shows

Christ's ruling authority. The calf (ox) parallels Jesus' sacrifice for mankind. The eagle is a fitting portrayal of Jesus' majesty while the human face is symbolic of Jesus' humanity.

The four living creatures are surely something on which to meditate! Someday soon we shall actually see these wonderful creatures, maybe touch them, possibly speak with them. When meditating on such things is can be difficult to actually visualize the sights that will be seen in the future. Whatever the reality. when we, who love GOD, finally see these creatures, we can be assured that God has prepared the scene for us long ago.

CHAPTER VIII

Seven Revelations from Son of God



8.1 BACKGROUND

Ever since the beginning, there have been successes and failures when it comes to how men and women have approached their relationship with God. Not all of the failures failed due to idolatry or atheism. Adam and Eve disobeyed the commandment of God; Esau sold his birth right; King Saul decided it was better to sacrifice unto God than to actually obey Him; and Judas sold out the Redeemer. Those who failed did so for a reason. Those that succeeded did so for a reason. Success or failure do not happen in a vacuum. Neither “just happens.” The problems are often caused by a lack of dedication or love. This leads some to try to simply do as little as possible. Others simply put off needful changes or obligations. Sometimes it is a matter of ego. Some have failed because they have allowed themselves to be deceived by others into believing something false. Some have simply not taken the time to prepare for a successful life of true faith. But, enough about failure. Let's look at success. Lets' talk about overcoming the world. Let's consider what we, in Christ, receive if we overcome. We have good reason to have confidence in His teachings about this. He has overcome the world and in this we have confidence and peace (John 16:33).



God loves His creation. Sin corrupted it, but now He has a plan to return it to its original state of perfection, and He will reward those who help Him carry out this plan. Sin was born because of Satan's desire to set himself above God, and it destroyed the harmony of heaven. Now God needs sin to be completely eradicated from all of His creation, in such a way that there is no possibility of it happening again. So He created mankind with the express intention that they should rule over sin. (Genesis 4:7) His entire plan is that mankind should live a life where they hate and resist sin, and say yes to Him – to overcome. One who overcomes sin in their life is proving that God's way is perfect and is part of the work of abolishing sin for all eternity. Each one who does this will taste the rich rewards of living such a life. These promises apply to *all* who overcome.

The apostle John was put on the island of Patmos by the Roman rulers because he had proclaimed God's word the truth that Jesus revealed (Revelation 1:9). While exiled on the island of Patmos, John received a revelation from Jesus Christ that we **now call the Book of Revelation**. In this vision of John, **Christ revealed SEVEN PROMISES to all believers through sending seven messages to seven first-century churches in Asia Minor**. On the Lord's Day i.e. on Sabbath Day (Revelation 1:10) John was told to write letters to seven different churches telling them about the visions that God gave him on the Isle of Patmos.

8.2 SEVEN PROMISES OF SON OF GOD

8.2.1 I give to eat the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God (Revelation 2:7; Genesis 2:9)

It is the first of the seven promises, and, like the rest, very glorious carrying us on to the return of the second Adam, and to paradise regained. Jesus promises in Revelation 2:7 to allow every conqueror the privilege of partaking of the tree of life in God's paradise. The tree of life appears first in the garden of Eden (Genesis 2:9; 3:22, 24) and is mentioned again in Revelation 22. Paradise is used here as a synonym for heaven (Luke 23:43; 2 Corinthians 12:3). The promise of paradise would encourage the conquerors to obey Jesus' instructions.

Amongst the trees in the garden of Eden, God placed the **tree of life, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.**



He told Adam and Eve that they may eat freely of every tree, except for the tree of knowledge. One simple rule. But we know the story. Eve was disobedient and ate of the tree anyway, having been deceived by Satan, in the form of a serpent. And she convinced Adam to do the same. **They chose their own**

will over God's good and perfect will, and through that simple act, sin also entered the world. If they ate of the tree of life now, they would have got eternal life. But then sin would have come into eternity. So God cut off access to the tree of life. "He drove out the MAN; and He placed cherubim at the east of the garden of Eden, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to guard the way to the tree of life." Genesis 3:24. They lost their opportunity for eternal life.

The Tree of Life certainly is a unique tree, different than all other trees. It was last seen by human eyes in the garden of Eden and its fruit was immortality. It shared a place in the middle of the garden with the tree of knowledge, also a unique tree (Genesis 2:9; 3:22-24). The consequences of disobedience had already been stated by God, and one of those consequences was death (Genesis 2:16-17). Obviously, then, the fruit, or benefit of the tree of life would no longer be accessible if man sinned, and man did sin. On the day of disobedience, MAN - male and female, died spiritually because of their disobedience, and became mortal due to the consequence of being separated from the tree of life (Genesis 3:1-6; 19). Death, though, was and is a blessing in disguise, as we shall see, though it may be difficult to accept death being a blessing in any sense. This is because that apart from mortality, there could be no redemption. Perhaps this is why the angels that fell have no redemption or hope. They are lost forever. But because of human mortality, you and I have hope.

God's Son would become a man, so He could die, so we could live. As death enters the picture, God assures the woman Eve that her descendant (Jesus) would be bruised by the serpent (Satan) but Satan would be crushed by Him (Genesis 3:15). Man suffers physical death due to the fall, a curse, but through the curse comes a blessing. The Perfect One became flesh and died for our sins, so

that we might live. For assuredly He does not give help to angels, but He gives help to the descendant of Abraham. (Hebrews 2:14-16; see verses 12-17) Now, we are told in our text that to those who overcome, access to the tree of life will be regained. It is ironic that the blessings of Christ, including access to the tree of life, is made possible by a cursed tree—the cross upon which Jesus shed His blood for us (Galatians 3:13,14; Acts 5:29-32). Because of what Jesus did for us, now we live in a time where **we again have the opportunity to “eat” of the tree of life.** What does that mean? ***Every time we choose to do God’s will instead of our own, we lay hold of something eternal; something is gained in our heart that has eternal value. Every time we resist temptation and overcome sin, we take a bite of the fruit of the tree of life. We are storing up for eternal life on the new earth that God creates.*** (Revelation 21:1) Everything connected with life is comprised in Jesus Christ—‘In Him was life; and the life was the light of men’ (John 1:4). He is the bread of life; the water of life; He is life itself; He is ‘eternal life’ (1 John 5:20). There will be no sin there, not even the temptation to sin. The reward for overcoming sin is eternal life with God! In that paradise is the tree of life; and the promise is of free access to it, the reverse of that refusal to man of access to the earthly tree (Genesis 3:22-23). Free entrance, free access, and free liberty to eat of the tree of life.

Death loses its sting for those who overcome (1 Corinthians 15:20-26; 54-58). This is because we have access to the tree through Jesus and the power of the resurrection. We should also recall that being raised with him spiritually is necessary to be raised to eternal life. This occurs when we are baptized into Him (Romans 6:3-5; 8-9). There quite simply is no way to overcome other than by faith in Jesus. The Scriptures state “and this is the victory that has overcome the world -- our faith.” (1 John 5:4). We must overcome the evil one (1 John 2:13-17). Practically speaking, this involves putting away sin and living our lives for the Father's glory. It would include: Having a profound reverence for God's word as He has given it (Revelation 22:18,19). Overcoming by faith means being steadfast, diligent and dedicated. **When the love of the world, or the things in the world, is too strong, it will diminish from our putting the necessary attention toward living for Christ each day. It may well cause us to fail, just as it did Adam and Eve in the garden.** Therefore, one balancing feature in our character is we must ‘hatred of the deeds of the Nicolaitanes, which, the Lord adds, ‘I also hate’ (verse 6). Hatred of evil—hatred of false doctrine (verse 15)—these are things which the Lord looks for in His Churches. Indifference to error, tolerance of evil, smoothing down the ridge between true and false teaching, whether by the press or the pulpit—these are things very common in our day, as proofs of liberality and large-mindedness. But the Lord says, ‘these things I hate.’ To be ‘broad’ and ‘wide’ is the universal boast; to be ‘narrow’ and ‘strait’ the worst of reproaches—as if ‘broad’ and ‘wide’ were not the words of the Master’s condemnation—as if He had not been said, ‘Enter in at the strait gate—for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leads to death; and strait is the gate, and narrow the way, leads to life.’ Awake, arise and shine, for our light has come! we are not yet a castaway. See from where we have fallen, what is our present low estate; see especially the bright recompense which may yet be ours, and let these things quicken us. Up, shake our self from the dust; gird on our sword; put on the whole armour of God; fight the good fight—it is not too late, even yet we may overcome! The tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God, may still be ours! For such a blessedness and brightness, who would not fight and suffer—and deny self—and toil to the end?

It is to those who overcome that Jesus promises access to the tree of life. As the Book of Revelation draws to a close, the tree of life is mentioned again. Further described, we are shown that it offers perpetual sustenance and healing as symbolized by 12 kinds of fruit, the tree yielding its fruit

every month. All things pertaining to the gift of eternal life are provided on a perpetual basis and the healing refers to release from all the wounds from our sorrows, pain, sin and losses as they cease their hurting forevermore (Revelation 22:2).

8.2.2 You shall not be hurt of the second death (Revelation 2:11)

Ever since the beginning, there have been successes and failures when it comes to how men and women have approached their relationship with God. Not all of the failures failed due to idolatry or atheism. Sometimes it is merely a matter of neglect, or stubbornness, or arrogance. Some have simply not taken the time to prepare for a successful life of true faith. All who fail do so for a reason. Those that succeed likewise do so for a reason. Success or failure do not happen in a vacuum. Neither randomly “just happens.” Revelation 2:8–11 contains Jesus' message, through John, to the church at Smyrna. Christians in Smyrna were undergoing intense persecution at the time these words were written. Jesus predicted even further persecution but told the believers not to fear. He **promised a crown of life to them if they remained loyal to Him to the point of martyrdom.** The church at Smyrna prefigures the history of the Church from the mid-third century to AD 316, when Emperor Constantine declared Christianity an official state religion. Out of seven churches mentioned in Revelation, Smyrna is one of only two not rebuked for any specific flaw.



One of the costs of sin is death. It might be more accurate to say that the costs of sin include death, both physical as well as spiritual death. In the previous section we saw how the tree of life, or the key to immortality, was taken from the human race (Genesis 2:9; 3:22-24). We also saw that the consequence of disobedience had been stated (Genesis 2:16-17). On the day of their disobedience, man died spiritually because of that sin, and also became mortal due to the consequence of being separated from the tree of life (Genesis 3:1-6; 19). Understand that there was more than one type of death going on here. But we also saw the blessing in the curse—at least the physical death part of it. Through Jesus becoming a man and redeeming us by His death, our salvation is made possible. Without death, it would not have been so. Apart from mortality, there could be no redemption—as is the case with the fallen angels (Hebrews 2:12-17).

There are two types of death: Spiritual death - a soul separated from God due to transgressions (Ephesians 2:1; 12,13; Isaiah 59:1,2). Physical death - A separation of the spirit from the body; the inner person from the outer. (James 2:26; Luke 23:46; 2 Corinthians 4:16-18; 5:4). Note that the "inner person", or spirit, does not cease to exist at death, but is described as being "unclothed" ... having no body. The spirit will receive a new body at the resurrection but continues to exist in a conscious state until then, longing for the new body which the Lord will prepare (1 Corinthians 15:50-53). The part of man that "sleeps" is the body, not the spirit. The spirit goes to God for judgment. Physical death is universal in its scope, and then comes the judgment (Hebrews 9:27; 2 Corinthians 5:10). The Sadducees of Jesus' day denied life after death and the resurrection. Jesus let them know that Abraham, Isaac and Jacob continued to exist after their physical deaths (Matthew 22:31,32). While **the first death is universal and cannot be avoided**, the good news is that the "second death" can be avoided, and in fact it ought to be made life's priority to do just that! Many would like to avoid the first as well, but, as they say, that horse is already out of the barn. However, in Jesus it can lose its' sting (1 Corinthians 15:54-58). But **the "second death" can be avoided, and again, it must be through Jesus**. We must ensure that the course of our life is leading us to avoid the second death. It's imperative. It's more important than anything. Everything good and all the potential for good hangs in the balance, and Jesus is the answer, and we need to take Him seriously.

The second death is the lake of fire. (Revelation 21:8). This is the judgment over everything that is tainted by sin. When someone has not used the opportunities in their life to overcome sin, they will be hurt by this second death, because nothing that cannot stand the fire of judgment will be allowed into eternity. For we who *have* used our opportunities while still here on this earth to **overcome** sin, we will not be hurt by that second death. We have recognized the sin that we are tempted to, judged it as unacceptable for one who wants to practice righteousness, and resisted it. We are an overcomer who live righteously and do what is good and true in every circumstance. And if we fall, we repent, are forgiven, and resolve to resist the temptation to sin the next time. We don't want to miss an opportunity! **The "second death" is the eternal separation from God. It is separation from His mercy, kindness and goodness. It is darkness and wailing. It is the complete loss of all good things. It is the opposite of eternal life** (Matthew 25:41,46). One only needs to see how the Scriptures describe the second death to understand the importance of the promise Jesus makes. We read of judgment and see the second death is also described as a "lake of fire" (Revelation 20:11-14). Let us avoid falling into that lake! Overcoming means that you and I will not be hurt by the second death! This is made possible by the grace of God made available through the atoning death of His Son. We also learn that Satan and His servants are there, not to rule as often depicted, but to also be punished consciously and eternally. (Revelation 20:10). It is so important to overcome in Christ! (Revelation 21:3-8). Now, I could put some effort into making the second death sound less threatening than the Scriptures of God describe it, but why would I? Many do just that. Lots of people appreciate a softer approach to judgment, at least for now. But I am certain such appreciation will vanish in eternity by all who, because of this, have neglected preparing for the judgment to come.

"Born Once - Die Twice or Born Twice- Die Once"?

If we are to overcome the evil one, it must be by our faith (1 John 2:13-17). We overcome by being buried and raised up with Christ (Romans 6:4,5; 8,9). Being raised with Christ from baptism is important. We are not ready for the second resurrection until we undergo this first, spiritual resurrection, rising from baptism to walk in newness of life. The book of Revelation figuratively describes this new life as a thousand-year reign with the Lord (Revelation 20:6). This spiritual

resurrection is also called a “new birth”. Jesus said one must be “born again” to see the kingdom of God (John 3:3-5). We are born again through our obedience to the truth (1 Peter 1:22,23). In this way, we overcome by faith. We must be “born of God” (1 John 5:4) and walk in our new life in Jesus. This is living each day by faith. This is the means to our victory bought by God's grace.

Paul said, “I can do all things through Him who strengthens me.” Jesus has shown us the way. But this is not something to be casual about. Overcoming by faith means being steadfast, diligent and dedicated. It is to those who overcome that Jesus promises access to the tree of life and that the second death will not hurt them. It is more than worthwhile to endure giving up our own will, the works of the flesh that Paul speaks about in Galatians 5, in order to do God's will. The love, goodness, longsuffering, etc. that replaces our natural selfishness, envy, uncleanness, and so on, are the results of living an overcoming life. These give us value that we will have for all eternity. There is grace for forgiveness of sins, but we also have grace for a much deeper life. Anytime an opportunity to overcome sin is missed we will be forgiven but have lost an opportunity to gain something of eternal value. That is the pain of the second death. That is an eternal loss. First Corinthians 15:41 talks about the glory of the sun, the moon, and the stars. This is symbolic of the eternal glory that we can come to. The more eternal value we have as a result of being faithful to overcome, the greater our eternal glory will be.

8.2.3 I give to eat of the hidden manna and will give you a white stone, and in stone a new name written, which no man knoweth (Revelation 2:17; Isaiah 62:2)

Revelation 2:12–17 is a message from Jesus to the church at Pergamum. Jesus commends the church for keeping the faith despite intense persecution and the pervading worship of Satan around them. Manna was a welcome source of food to the Israelites during their journey through the desert en route to Canaan. The overcomers at Pergamum refused to eat food offered to idols, but they will enjoy bread from heaven. The feast Jesus prepares for His faithful servants exceeds by far anything the Devil offers us. However, some members of the church followed the teaching of Balaam (*who taught Balak, the king of Moab to cast a stumbling-block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, use Midianite women to seduce the men of Israel and lead them to worship other gods and to commit fornication; Numbers 22-24*), and others followed the teaching of the Nicolaitans (*The Nicolaitans appear to come from a sect group at the time that followed a man by the name of Nicolas. His name can derive from a Greek root meaning “conqueror” or “destroyer.” Some think Nicolas is the same man who appears to convert to Christianity in Acts 6:5 but lost his way to a teaching known as Gnosticism, a heretical teaching that swept away many members of the church in the second century.*

Moreover, Nicolaitans also appeared to eat food offered to idols, which Acts appears to decree against in Acts 15:29. Although this one doesn't seem like a major offense, in their context, they had committed a serious spiritual crime).

Jesus calls the church out for repentance regarding those flaws. Failure to repent would bring judgment.



God gave manna to Israel in the wilderness (Exodus 16:11-15). This was during the Exodus from Egypt. A whole nation of people needed sustenance to survive in a barren wilderness in order to reach Canaan. Only God could have preserved such a great number of people in the desert and wastelands. He did so with a food called manna which would fall from the sky and water from rocks. The word "manna" means "What is it?" which probably refers to the initial reaction of the people when they found it all around one morning. The Old Testament often refers to this event suggesting that it shows how God cares for His people. In fact, a pot of it was kept in the ark of the covenant to remind the people of God's care (Exodus 16:33,34; Hebrews 9:4). When the people saw the ark, they would remember the things it contained and what they represented. The people would not have survived without it. God gave them everything necessary which they could not provide for themselves, but then expected them to trust and obey Him by doing the things they could. Jesus uses this figure to tell us something that is similar.

"Hidden manna" refers to that which sustains and strengthens us as Christians in our faith. By faith disciples can overcome even the most difficult of circumstances. The persecution of the church at Pergamum had been great. One of the members of that body had been executed (Revelation 2:13). But even in the most peaceful of times, there is a danger of becoming complacent and surrendering. People deny the Lord sometimes under threat, but at other times just through neglect. We need God's manna to sustain us in the wilderness of this world as we journey toward our spiritual promised land. If we supply the faith, God will supply our strength. The hidden manna is something that we receive already in this life. It corresponds to our hidden life. Our hidden life is that place inside where no one knows what is going on except for we individually and God. It's where we are tempted to impure thoughts, to pride, to lying, etc. It's where we fight and overcome those temptations. The hidden manna is the help that we get when we pray for it in those times. It is the nourishment we receive, the power from on high. It is given to everyone who asks for it, everyone with a longing to be free from sin. The hidden manna gives vitality and life.

Jesus is our "bread of life" (John 6:47-51). The things Jesus provides is to the spirit what physical bread is to the body. It fills the emptiness and satisfies deep human longings. It instills confidence and hope. Jesus refers to eating his flesh and drinking his blood - not literally, but figuratively through receiving His word and example into our hearts. Going through the motions won't do it. (John 6:52-58). One must fully receive Jesus. Some think life can be successful without this part. It can't. Many pampered bodies are home to starving souls. How blessed is one who realizes their soul's need for this bread, for that is necessary to be filled (Matthew 5:6). "Filled" - "Strengthened" - "Hope" - "Purpose" - "Confidence" - "Endurance" are some of the results of receiving this hidden manna (Philippians 4:11-13; Ephesians 3:16; 6:10).

Jesus also promises a white stone with a new name inscribed on it. Only the recipient of the honour knows the inscribed name. We cannot say with certainty what this stone represents, but we can be sure the recipient enjoys approval from Jesus and fellowship with Him. White stones were used for several things in the ancient world, especially in Greece. With what would have these disciples at Pergamum have associated with a "white stone" as promised them by Jesus if they overcome. The word means a small pebble, so that helps. In ancient courts, the accused were acquitted or condemned by vote of a jury, council or panel. The voting member would cast a white pebble for "acquittal" or a black pebble for "guilty". Members of tribunals condemning Christians would have cast "black stones" against them. At Pergamum, evidently black stones had been cast when judging Antipas. He was put to death. But Jesus says, "I will give one who overcomes a "white stone"; that is, He declares such a one as vindicated, pure and guiltless. It does not matter if the world condemns you if the one who has the keys of death sets you free! When facing ridicule or worse, remember that. The Lord will give you vindication and victory if you overcome by faith! (Revelation 1:18; Romans 8:31-34; 38-39; Hebrews 7:25; 10:38-39).

More likely, however, this is a reference to the Roman custom of giving victors in athletic competitions a white stone inscribed with their name. This token served as their "ticket" to enter into an awards celebration later on. The white stone is a symbol of whom we have become through our faithfulness and our determination to rule over sin. It is rock-hard faith and purity. Here on earth our faith is being tested – there in eternity it will have been proven; it's withstood the testing. Written on this stone of flint-hard faith will be our new name. This name will reflect the battle. Almost all talk of battles and wars when concerning a Christian life refers to the inner battle that arises when a sinful thought tempts us individually. God's Spirit and the flesh are at odds. When we have decided to only do... that we have stood in, and sufferings that we have endured. It will illustrate who we've become because of our faithfulness and God's grace. (2 Peter 1:4) We *know* the battles we had to endure to get there, and we will immediately identify with that name. It will be the ultimate symbol of victory and transformation. All of this is proof that our faithfulness is highly esteemed by God. This new name, that only He and we individually know, is the testimony of our spirit; it's how God sees us. He doesn't see what we were according to our human nature. He sees the new creation in us, the result of our faithfulness to Him and His commandments. (2 Corinthians 5:17) And that is what we will be for all eternity. No more battle to overcome sin, but a new creation to live in eternal purity! The promise of being given "a new name" probably refers to the new status one who has been born of God and has overcome. Lots of things are said to be "new" ... there is a "new heavens and earth" where the redeemed sing "a new song" as "new creatures" who are walking in "newness of life". Exalted with Christ in eternity will bring wonderful changes. And now, by faith, we glimpse glories to come in our joy and confidence as faithful Christians. We are sustained with manna now but look forward to the "land flowing with milk and honey". And it is true that no one can know us but we individually. Right now, we either know what we are talking about - or we don't. We know Jesus, or we do not. We understand the joys of discipleship, or we do not. No one on this earth knows us but we individually to ourselves. Overcoming by faith means being steadfast, diligent and dedicated. (1 John 5:3,4). It is to those who overcome that Jesus promises access to the tree of life and that the second death will not hurt them. He also promises hidden manna and a white stone. What wonderful hope these things symbolize!

8.2.4 You shall rule over the nations "with a rod of iron" and I will give you "the morning star" (Revelation 2:27-28)

This ruling action will be in cooperation with Jesus. Psalm 2:9 predicts that Jesus will rule the nations with a rod of iron and dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel. The word "rod" refers to a shepherd's staff. Jesus will be not only King over all the nations but also their Shepherd. The fact that He and the conquerors use a staff of iron indicates that not everyone will voluntarily submit to Jesus' rule, but everyone will have to submit to it. At the end of Jesus' earthly reign, those who



submitted unwillingly will rebel. They will marshal themselves against Jesus but fall dead when He strikes them with a sharp sword that proceeds from His mouth (Revelation 19:15–21). **The authority to rule the nations follows an order. The father grants it to Jesus, and in turn Jesus grants it to His faithful followers.**

Revelation 2:18–29 reveals what Jesus instructed John to write to the church at Thyatira. Although the church exhibited commendable virtues, it allowed an evil woman—here referred to as Jezebel—to lead its members into immorality and idolatry. Jesus predicted strict punishment for her and her followers. The churches would know by Jesus' action that He searches the mind and heart and deals with everyone according to his or her works. Those who did not follow Jezebel's teachings (*a woman who has gathered many teachings and calls herself a prophetess, who brought so many pagan teachings and practices into the church and mixed them with the teachings concerning Christ. The result then was idol worship and fornication*) would not be punished, but Jesus encouraged them to stay loyal to Him until His return, when He will rule the nations and permit the faithful to rule with Him. **Jesus promises to give them the morning star.** The faithful in the church were surrounded by moral and spiritual darkness, but the time would come when they would experience the glorious rays of Christ, the morning star. The reference points us to the rapture, the event that transports Christians from earth to the presence of Jesus (1 Thessalonians 4:13–17). At that time Christians will be free from trials and persecution. Our bodies will be like the body of our risen Lord (Philippians 3:20–21). They will be incapable of dying (1 Corinthians 15:50–57). Aches and pains will all be in the past, and spiritually we will be like Jesus, entirely free of sin (1 John 3:2).

At the end of the Old Testament, we learn that Israel's hope of the coming of Messiah to establish His kingdom is buoyed by the promise that the sun of righteousness shall rise (Malachi 4:2). At His second coming—His coming to earth—Jesus will appear in glory as the sun of righteousness, but before that event takes place, He will come in the air for all Christians. That is the Christian's blessed hope. This order of events is noteworthy. Before the sun appears, the morning star appears. So Jesus will appear first for Christians, in the rapture, and after a seven-year period of tribulation, He will come and establish His earthly kingdom to fulfil Israel's hope.

8.2.5 I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels (Revelation 3:5; Exodus 32:32)

Revelation 3:1–6 comprises the letter Jesus dictated to John to send to the church in Sardis. The church's reputation was a far cry from reality. It had a reputation of being a live church, but



actually it was dead. While this reputation is—technically—a praise, it's a hollow one. Jesus instructed this church to wake up and strengthen what remained. All was not lost, though. A few members of the church were true to the faith, and Jesus promised they would walk with Him in purity. He would also keep their names in the book of life and confess their names before His Father.

In Revelation 3:5, Jesus extends three promises to every faithful believer. **First, He will grant Him white garments** (also in Isaiah 61:10 and II Corinthians 5:21). Roman officials customarily wore white clothing at religious festivals as symbols of high honour. White clothing that is given to the faithful represents not only honour but also purity and righteousness. This is a picture of the "righteousness of God" that is required for salvation. II Corinthians 5:21 tells us, "For he hath made him (Jesus Christ) to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." In other words, Jesus Christ traded places with us on the cross of Calvary. He took our sin upon himself in order that He might give us His righteousness. This is pictured in the Old Testament as a "garment of salvation" or a "robe of righteousness." Our righteousness based on our deeds are filthy rags according to Isaiah 64:6. "But we are all as unclean things, and all our righteousness are as filthy rags (Isaiah 64:6)." Isaiah also wrote, "I will greatly rejoice in the LORD; my soul shall exult in my God, for He has clothed me with the garments of salvation; He has covered me with the robe of righteousness" (Isaiah 61:10). Therefore, the promise is that every believer (overcomer) shall be clothed in white raiment speaking of the righteousness of God (II Corinthians 5:21). **Second, Jesus promises that He will not blot the faithful believer's name out of the book of life**. (also in Daniel 12:1; Luke 10:20 and Philippians 4:3) While some individuals think this statement implies that a believer may lose His salvation, it simply means the conqueror—the "overcomer" (1 John 5:4,5)—can be secure knowing their name will never be erased. Every born-again person has eternal life that will be His divinely given possession forever (John 5:24; 6:35–37, 6:39; 10:28–29; Romans 8:1). Does the idea of blotting out a name from the Book of Life imply **loss of salvation**? There is **the Book of Life** and then there is **the Lamb's Book of Life**. **These are different books**. The Book of Life is the book of physical life. The Lamb's Book of Life is the book of eternal life. When we are born the first time, God places our names in the Book of Life. When we are born the second time, God places us in the book of eternal life, a register and roll of all who shall inherit eternal life. When we die, God blots us out of the Book of Life. God never blots our names out of the Lamb's Book of life. In Exodus 32:31-33 we read, "Then Moses returned to the Lord and said, 'Oh, these people have committed a great sin, and have made for themselves a god of gold!' 'Yet now, if You will forgive their sin—but if not, I pray, blot me out of **Your book** which You have written.'" Moses asks God to kill him. He asks God to take him out of the book of physical life. Jesus will physically blot out the life of those who do not gain victory in their spiritual lives. This letter is a challenge to the **church** of Sardis. The context deals with an active church with many ministries but also a church that is devoid of spiritual fruit. Therefore, Jesus will blot this church out of existence if she does not repent. This passage in context does not deal with salvation but with a church out of phase with God. The implication that we can lose our salvation infers that works justifies us. This falls short of by faith alone, by grace alone. Salvation is **free**, a gift of God based on the death of Christ for our sins (Ephesians 2:8-9). What does this passage mean by the idea that Jesus will "never" blot out his name from the Book of Life? It obviously does not mean that he can never lose his salvation for John clarifies that in other passages (John 5:24; 6:35-37, 39; 10:28-29; Romans. 8:38-39). If we did not become Christians by good works, then we cannot become non-Christians by bad works. God bases our salvation on the finished work of Christ, not on our works. A person can never have security of eternal life by what he does; he can only have eternal security based on what Christ did. Remember, according to Revelation 3:5, if you believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, he will not blot your name out. What is the sin that can cause your name to be

blotted out? It is unbelief. It is the rejection of Jesus Christ as Saviour. This is the unpardonable sin. (See John 3:36, 1 John 5:12). In John 3:18 we have this unpardonable sin given. "He that believeth on him is not condemned; but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God." A person living in unbelief is living in a condemned state already. If that person puts their trust in Jesus Christ as Saviour before they die, God promises in Revelation 3:5 that "...I will not blot out his name from the book of life..." If that person dies in unbelief, then at that point, God blots their name out of the book of life. What a fantastic promise! The believer will be clothed with the righteousness of God, and his name will never be blotted out of the book of life. In other words, you can never be lost once you trust the Lord Jesus Christ as Saviour. **Third**, Jesus assures the faithful believer that He will confess His name before His Father and the angels. In a public ceremony in heaven, Jesus will acknowledge that these overcoming, enduring, faithful "conquerors" belong to Him. We are not told much about what is presently happening in heaven, but we are informed that "there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth. (Luke 15:10). I believe that what happens at the moment of salvation, according to Revelation 3:5, is that an announcement is made in heaven that you have trusted Christ, (as Jesus said, "before my Father; and before his angels"). (Revelation 3:5 and Luke 15:10) Evidently, great joy follows the announcement in Heaven. Moreover, in Matthew 10:32–33 and Luke 12:8–9 we read, I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels- Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven. Further in Revelation 13:8 and Revelation 17:8 we read, Revelation 13:8 says: "And all who dwell on the earth will worship [the beast], everyone whose name has not been written before the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb who was slain." Revelation 17:8 says: "The beast that you saw was, and is not, and is about to rise from the bottomless pit and go to destruction. And the dwellers on earth whose names have not been written in the book of life from the foundation of the world will marvel to see the beast, because it was and is not and is to come."

Being in the book, having your name in the book, keeps you from doing what would get you erased from the book if you did it — like worshiping the beast. What a verse! Remember the key to understand to whom this verse is addressed is found in 1 John 5:4–5. 1 John says, "Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God." Have you trusted Christ? If so, the three promises of Revelation 3:5 are yours. Great news isn't it? Therefore, an overcomer is clearly a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ. We become overcomers not on the basis of what we have or will accomplish, but on the basis of the finished work of Jesus Christ on the cross of Calvary. So, therefore, we know that Revelation 3:5 is addressed to those that are born of God, those who have trusted Jesus Christ as their Saviour.

8.2.6 I will write upon you the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon you my new name (Revelation 3:12; Isaiah 62:2)

Revelation 3:7–13 contains Jesus' message to the church at Philadelphia. Philadelphia was a center for exporting the Greek language and culture into the interior of Asia Minor. Thus, it had a secular missionary calling. Just as the city had an open door to the interior, so the church had an open door to spread the gospel. Jesus commends the church in Revelation 3:10 and promises to keep it from the tribulation period. He also instructs the church to retain the truth and promises each conqueror special recognition in the New Jerusalem. Smyrna and Philadelphia are the only churches in Revelation not to receive any particular criticism. The church at Philadelphia's

characteristics are similar to those of the Church in the 19th and 20th centuries that was a period of frequent revivals and missionary activity.



It's interesting to note that the ancient city of Philadelphia was vulnerable to earthquakes that collapsed buildings. By contrast, God is suggesting that nothing could cause the conquering believers in Philadelphia to tremble and fall. They would stand tall like firm columns in God's temple, a reference to heaven. When an earthquake struck Philadelphia, the residents left the city in search of a safe place, but the Christian overcomers would remain safe forever in heaven. Jesus also promised to inscribe on these overcomers the name of His Father, the name of the New Jerusalem, and Jesus' own name. The New Jerusalem will descend from heaven when Jesus establishes His royal residence on earth (Revelation 21:9–27). Hebrews 13:14 points out that believers do not have a permanent residence on earth, but we look forward to living in a permanent one. The permanent city is the New Jerusalem. Possessing the name of our heavenly Father, the name of the New Jerusalem, and the new name of Jesus suggests that believers will receive honours that abide eternally.

Philadelphia means '*love for the brethren*'.. and true, godly love for one another, can only be manifested, in the life of a believer, who is in fellowship with the Father and walking in spirit and truth. These Philadelphian Christians recognised Jesus as the One Who is holy and true. They confessed His absolute sovereignty and acknowledged that He alone, has been given the keys of David. Jesus alone has the keys of the kingdom of God - against which, the gates of hell cannot prevail. They acknowledged Christ's Lordship in their lives. They believed in His power to open gates that no one could shut, and to close doors that no one could reopen. They also renounced Jewish legalism, which places people back under the 'law of sin and death', and they exposed the pagan cults, that denied the deity of Christ or denounced His perfect humanity. They opposed the self-appointed Jews, who despised the truth of the glorious gospel of grace, by claiming to be God's chosen people, when they were, in fact, a synagogue of Satan.

Our lives should reflect this body of believers... for they were beloved of the Lord and received no condemnation from Him, but were instead, commended for their perseverance. And so they were given a promise: *He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he will not go out from it anymore; and I will write on him the name of My God, and the name of the city of My God, the new Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God - and I will write on him My new name.* The same promise that was given to the Philadelphian Christians can become our promise, when we love the Lord our God with all our heart, and when we love the brethren with the same godly love that comes through Christ. The Christian has been given all he needs to love

as Christ loved, so that we are enabled to overcome the world-*(by faith)*, to overcome the enemy-*(by resisting the devil)* and to overcome the flesh-*(by denying self and taking up our cross, as a true disciple of Christ)*. The precious promise, to become a pillar in the Temple of God, should thrill the hearts of all born-again believers, for this is a reminder that we have the permanently, indwelling Spirit of God, Who has become our 'life', through time and into eternity.

God, in His grace, chose to use our bodies as His permanent dwelling place, during this dispensation of grace. Today, those who have been saved by faith in Christ, are a Temple of the living God. However, a day is coming when each member of Christ's body will receive an incorruptible body - and the new Jerusalem will become our heavenly home. The new Jerusalem will become the heavenly Temple of God, and we, who have the indwelling Spirit of God, will remain as established pillars in that glorious Temple of the Lord, for we have been promised a part of Christ's, heavenly rule, when He reigns as King of kings and Lord of lords. Having been identified with Christ and positioned in Him by faith.. we will similarly be identified with Him in the eternal ages to come - for when we see Him, we shall be like Him - having immortal bodies of flesh and bone, for we are bone of His resurrected bone and flesh of His resurrected body. We who have overcome the world, the flesh and the devil in this life, by faith, will be made a pillar in the temple of our God, and we will not go out from His presence anymore.

On that day, our redemption will be fully completed. On that day our justification, sanctification and glorification will be finalised, when our spirit, soul and body is at last made perfect in Christ. Our positional identification and progressive sanctification with the Lord Jesus will be completed and we will be perfected, spirit, soul and body - and He has promised, *I will write on him the name of My God, and the name of the city of My God, the new Jerusalem.*

By grace we are sealed by the Spirit and identified with Christ NOW, and by grace we will be permanently identified with Him, throughout eternity, for we will have His name inscribed upon us forever, for none can pluck us out of His nail-pierced hand - and no one can pluck us out of the hand of our heavenly Father.

8.2.7 I will grant you to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne (Revelation 3:21)

Revelation 3:14–22 is Jesus' final and most strident message, addressed to the church at Laodicea. We learn from this assessment that the Laodicean church was lukewarm, smug, and self-satisfied. It boasted about its wealth and need of nothing. But the church deceived itself. In terms of its spiritual condition, it was wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked. Jesus urged the church to turn to Him, as He was positioned outside the church, inviting whoever heard His voice to open the door and welcome Him. But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ and raised up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus. Ephesians 2:4-6 How does this verse affect us? Paul is not speaking here literally and physically; he is speaking spiritually. He tells us that through God's saving power demonstrated in Christ's resurrection we already enjoy participation through the Holy Spirit in the heavenly realms where God and Christ reside. This is one of the benefits of life "in Christ" and His resurrection and ascension. Being "in Christ" makes all this possible. When we accept Jesus as our Lord and Saviour, we are totally and eternally united with Christ. Therefore, being "in Christ" means that when God looks at us, He does not see our sins, He sees Christ. "For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God." (Colossians 3:3) Our seating and reigning with Christ is a position of authority, honour, and triumph—not failure, depression, and defeat. God made the believer in Jesus Christ to be triumphant, because we are partakers of Christ's victory over Satan. For the believer, our seating

with Christ is part of our inheritance now. The words “raised us up” in our verse is past tense, therefore, our position in Christ is already an accomplished fact. That means we are to live as ambassadors for Christ and share the good news with all that we come in contact with, and to exhibit the Christ-like life to the people we meet. When we realize our position in Christ, it makes a tremendous difference in our lives and we will no longer feel defeated.



How many times have we heard this verse in church or read it in the Bible and just sort of moved on past it without really considering the absolute shocking incredibly wonderful statement saying that WE (that means You, if you belong to God) are SEATED (past tense, which means NOW) in the heavenly places with Jesus? Have you ever stopped to ponder what that

means? Well, you say, how can that be true? That's really a rather odd picture! --Us sitting with the Lord in His Throne, meaning we'll share His power! It almost seems improper, Him letting us share His Throne! --Unless we see ourselves as He sees us, like little children! That's much more understandable, thinking of ourselves as little children sitting beside Him in His Throne. Thrones aren't normally big enough for two grown people, but they're always big enough for a child or two on the lap or beside one adult. Jesus will pick us up and put us on His Throne or set us on His knee. We sit with the Lord in His Throne, so that makes us princes and princesses, children of the King! --And just as little children have power to influence their father when they sit with him in his throne, we've got power with our Heavenly Father too! That's how much the Lord loves you and me! He's going to let us sit down with Him in His Throne, because we please Him and we love Him and He loves us! Isn't that a beautiful picture?

Moreover, I'm still right here on earth, stuck in all the muck and mire of this world. Why yes, that's true for your Body and your Soul. You see, we are triune beings just like God. We are a spirit living within a body that has a soul. (The soul is your mind, will, and emotions). The most important part of us and the Eternal part is our Spirit. We are made in God's image, and the Scripture tells us that God is Spirit. Hence, we are spirit as well. It is our spirit that is really we. Our spirit directs our mind and emotions and our mind directs our body. But the source of power is our spirit. Unfortunately, many believers today and all non-believers allow their soul and/or body to be the boss, and because our soul and bodies are tainted with the curse of sin and are unregenerate, they will only lead us into darkness and death.

Before we met Jesus, our spirit was essentially dead. It was born with a sense of right and wrong called our conscience, but over the years, without the life-giving infusion of God's spirit, it slowly began to die. If we ignored our conscience and kept sinning and sinning, then our spirit died even more. When we gave our entire life to Jesus, our spirit came alive! (1 Peter 3:18) Now, our spirit is infused with the Holy Spirit and is completely regenerated. We are a new man or a new woman! Old things have passed away. But our soul and body are still in sin here on earth. It's like we are wearing some old, ragged clothing that we can't take off. That clothing is keeping us in a certain place for now that we can't leave. But when that clothing grows too old and worn and torn and it falls off us, then our spirit is free!

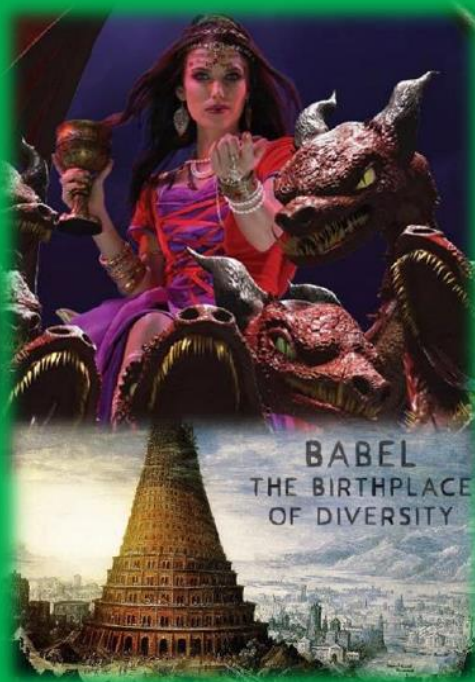
Hebrews 8:1 describes Jesus' present position as that of sitting at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven. Someday, however, Jesus will leave the throne in heaven and occupy a throne on earth. The angel Gabriel told Mary that her child Jesus would "be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to Him the throne of His father David, and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end" (Luke 1:32–33). Undoubtedly, the promise to the repentant overcomer anticipates the privilege of participating in Jesus' kingdom administration.

8.3 CONCLUSION

He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; (Revelation 2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22). James compares the person who is a hearer of the Word but not a doer of it to a man who looks at his face in a mirror and leaves, forgetting what he saw (James 1:23–24). He adds: "But the one who looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and perseveres, being no hearer who forgets but a doer who acts, he will be blessed in his doing" (James 1:25). The invitation is similar to what Jesus said during His earthly ministry: "He who has ears to hear, let Him hear" (Matthew 11:15; Mathew 13:9, 43; Mark 4:9, 23; Mark 7:16; Mark 8:18; Luke 8:8; Luke 9:44; Luke 14:35; Revelation 13:9). Of course, Jesus' invitation to hear means more than simply taking in audible sounds. It means to heed: to accept and to obey. In James 1:22 this meaning is clear. James writes, "But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves."

CHAPTER IX

Four Women in the Book of Revelation



9.1 INTRODUCTION

Most of us don't like and take interest in reading the *Book of Revelation* for various reasons. This is the concluding book of the Bible and is one of the most valuable books for Christian life. This is the greatest revelation for humankind where Father God, Glorified Jesus, the Holy Spirit, Angels and MAN [John] were engaged to write and convey the messages to Christians. It is written for the believers [Churches], not for the non-believers. In Deuteronomy 12: 32 we read, "What thing soever I command you, observe to do it: thou shalt not add thereto, nor diminish from it". The Book of Revelation is the only book that says, ***"Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand (Revelation 1:3; Revelation 22:7)"*** as well as says, ***".....if any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book (Revelation 22:18-19)"***. This is written for ordinary people with its practical purpose so that they can prepare themselves for welcoming of glorified Jesus to earth, reign on earth with him, and qualify themselves in His judgement. It has about 56 predictions, which is the highest number of predictions revealed in *the New Testament* and encourages us to live in Faith, Hope & Love. Moreover, Revelation 22:12-13 says, "Behold, I am coming soon, bringing my recompense with me, to repay each one for what he has done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end".

When I began reading the book of Revelation for its spiritual benefits. I started to take this book of Scripture seriously and saw a pattern emerging which gave tremendous importance to WOMEN in Chapter 2, Chapter 12, Chapter 17 and Chapter 21 & 22. I asked many questions in relation to their importance, such as: Who do they represent? How are they understood by Christians? Why would Christians identify with them? What makes them so unique? When did their importance begin in Christian history? Where is the factual basis for their importance in Christian history found? What do these "women" tell us about God, Jesus, the Spirit and our relationship to the Trinity? And, finally, what do they tell us about ourselves? These tantalizing questions about these fascinating women led me on a personal journey of research and study of the Book of Revelation which continues as we enter the new millennium.

In the Book of Revelation, we find four female figures throughout the Book of Revelation: 'Jezebel' (Chapter 2), the unnamed woman "clothed with the sun" (Chapter 12), 'Babylon' (Chapter 17), and 'Jerusalem' (Chapter 21 & 22). Let us try to figure out who are they and what do they represent?

9.2 THE FIRST WOMAN "CLOTHED WITH THE SUN" – REPRESENTS TO "ISRAEL" AND "FAITHFUL CHURCH"

In Revelation 12:1-17 we find the woman clothed with the sun. We read, *"And there appeared a great wonder in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars: And there appeared another wonder in heaven; and behold a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads. And his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth: and the dragon stood before the woman which was ready to be delivered, for to devour her child as soon as it was born. And she brought forth a man child, who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron: and her child was caught up unto God, and to his throne. And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared of God, that they should feed her there a thousand two hundred and threescore days. And when the dragon saw that he was cast unto the earth, he persecuted the woman which brought forth the man child. And to the woman were given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness, into her place, where she is nourished for a time, and times, and half a time, from the face*

of the serpent. And the serpent cast out of his mouth water as a flood after the woman, that he might cause her to be carried away of the flood. And the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed up the flood which the dragon cast out of his mouth. And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ."

If we look at the tradition of the Church, Pope Pius X in 1904, Pope Pius XII in 1950, and Pope John Paul II, in his 1995 encyclical *The Gospel of Life*, stated that the Blessed Virgin Mary is the "woman clothed with the sun" in Revelation 12:1, which may not be true, because the predictions in Book of Revelation are about the future events. Moreover, the Scriptures say that she is not an actual woman, but a symbolic representation of 'Israel' and 'Faithful Church'.

Israel is pictured in the *Old Testament* as the 'WOMAN', the wife of God (Isaiah 54:5-8; Jeremiah 3:6-8, 31:32; Ezekiel 16:32; Hosea 2:16). In Isaiah 54:5-8 we read, "For thy Maker is thine husband; the Lord of hosts is his name; and thy Redeemer the Holy One of Israel; The God of the whole earth shall he be called. For the Lord hath called thee as a woman forsaken and grieved in spirit, and a wife of youth, when thou wast refused, saith thy God. For a small moment have I forsaken thee; but with great mercies will I gather thee. In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the Lord thy Redeemer".

In likening the woman to the Queen Bride of Israel, his description of her echoes Isaiah, who said that Israel would be arrayed like a radiant Queen Bride (Isaiah 60:19-20; Isaiah 62:3-5). Solomon's bride in the Song of Solomon is similarly described (Songs 6:10). John drives this point home by telling us that the woman wears a crown of twelve stars, an obvious symbol of the twelve tribes of Israel. In the Old Testament, God referred to His people as a woman whom He had dressed in honour and splendor (Ezekiel 16). The garland with 12 stars may be symbolic of the 12 tribes of Israel (Genesis 37:9-11). In Genesis 37:9 we read, "And he dreamed yet another dream, and told it his brethren, and said, Behold, I have dreamed a dream more; and, behold, the sun and the moon and the eleven stars made obeisance to me". Being clothed with the sun speaks of the glory, dignity, and exalted status of Israel, the people of promise who will be saved, and given a kingdom. The picture of the moon under her feet possibly describes God's covenant relationship with Israel, since new moons were associated with worship (1 Chronicles 23:21; 2 Chronicles 2:4, 8:13; Ezra 3:5; Psalm 81:3). The 12 stars represent the twelve tribes of Israel.

In Genesis 3: 14-16 we read, "And the Lord God said unto the serpent, Because thou hast done this, thou art cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field; upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life: And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel. Unto the woman he said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee. Further we read in Matthew 24:15-16 about the flee into the wilderness. It says, when ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand:) Then let them which be in Judaea flee into the mountains:

Throughout Revelation 12 we note that the "woman" is repeatedly protected by God (verses 6, 14-16), especially as the time approaches for the "kingdom of our God" to be established on earth (verse 10). In the New Testament, God's Church is symbolized as a woman; and its members are likened to virgins (Matthew 25:1-13; Revelation 14:4; Revelation 19:7). The New Testament Church is called "the Israel of God" (Galatians 6:16) and likened to "Jerusalem above," which is called "the mother of us all" (Galatians 4:26, also see Hebrews 12:22-23). Members of the Church

are described as “a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His [God’s] own special people” (1 Peter 2:9). Moreover, throughout Revelation, the twelve tribes are also reckoned as signs of the twelve Apostles, the representatives of the new Israel, the Church (Revelation 7:4–8; 21:12–14). So, just as Daughter Zion was a symbol of the chosen people of God—Israel—the woman in Revelation is also a symbol of the new people of God, the Church. Paul, in language similar to that of Revelation, called the Church “the Jerusalem above . . . our mother.” He also spoke of the Church as the Bride of Christ (Galatian 4:26; Ephesians 5:31–32). Likewise, John referred to the Church as a “Lady” (2 John, verse 5). The woman of Revelation, however, is more than a symbol for the Church. She is also its mother with “offspring” in addition to the one male child to whom she gives birth. And those children are described in Revelation as those who believe in Jesus. John’s language recalls Jesus’ words to his Apostles in John 14:1–3. The language of preparing a place is also often used in the New Testament to describe the destiny God has planned for his children (Matthew 20:23, 25:34; 1 Peter 1:5; 1 Corinthians 2:9). John’s words also evoke God’s care for Israel in the wilderness (Exodus 19:4; Deuteronomy 1:31–33, 32:10–12, 8:2–3).

The woman also serves as a collective symbol for both Israel and the Church. The description of the woman reflects her heavenly glory, and the twelve stars of her glorious crown symbolize the people of God, the twelve Patriarchs of Israel (Genesis 37) and the twelve Apostles of the New Covenant of the Church of Christ. She is Israel, Daughter Zion (Isaiah 62:11), the woman in travail (Micah 4:10), the nation from whom the Messiah comes, the community of faith and obedience that awaits the birth of the Messiah. In Hebrew a country is expressed in the feminine tense, as mother of her inhabitants (Isaiah 66:7–9). When Christ returns to earth, He is going to marry the Church, which is called “His wife” in Revelation 19:7. Based on these passages, it is clear that the woman in Revelation 12 represents God’s people.

9.3 THE SECOND WOMAN JEZEBEL – REPRESENTS THE “PEGAN CHURCH” OR “COMPROMISED CHURCH” AS IN THYATIRA

This woman represents the pagan church. This isn't the actual queen Jezebel who once actually lived. (1 Kings, 2 Kings). This Jezebel mentioned in Revelation 2:20 was more likely a Jezebel type. She was a woman who actually was living and harming the church at Thyatira, but was called by Jesus "Jezebel." This was not a compliment. In Revelation 2: 20-24 we read, *“Notwithstanding I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols. And I gave her space to repent of her fornication; and she repented not. Behold, I will cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of their deeds. And I will kill her children with death; and all the churches shall know that I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts: and I will give unto every one of you according to your works. But unto you I say, and unto the rest in Thyatira, as many as have not this doctrine, and which have not known the depths of Satan, as they speak; I will put upon you none other burden.”*

One cannot understand the message of the letter to Thyatira and trait of this women, if we do not understand something of the situation at Thyatira and the background of Jezebel.

Thyatira was a commercial city, a town of merchants and craftsman, which is addressed to the least important of the seven cities mentioned in *the Book of Revelation* [seven churches], but surely not the least interesting. Thyatira was a church that was suffering a sorcerer, conniving with a crone, and winking at a witch in her midst.

We're not surprised then that the Laura Ashley of the day was Lydia. She was an individual of whom we read in Acts 16:14, that she was from Thyatira and that her business was the business of dye. Now, the dye was common in Thyatira was taken from some plants and also some little shellfish. One drop of which was responsible for the purple dye that was so valued by the ancients.

In fact, to have one pound of this dye cost about two hundred dollars in today's value. So one can see that it's expensive, and Lydia was a merchant lady of some success. She was, according to the Book of Acts 16:14 she was in Philippi and carrying on her business. We read there, "And a certain woman, named Lydia, a seller of purple of the city of Thyatira, which worshiped God heard us," so Thyatira as a home, a commercial city particularly dealing with the purple dye.

Thyatira was one of the least important of these cities, no doubt about that, but in its guilds was its power, so that the commercial guilds governed the life of Thyatira. That means that anyone who lived in Thyatira was a person who was associated with the business of the city, had to be associated with the business of the city, and was faced with some particular problems because in the ancient guilds they were very much like fraternities or sororities. An individual who was in a guild, and most of the citizens no doubt were associated with them, had particular meetings in which they got together, discussed their own affairs, and generally had a pretty good time. One of the things that they did was, they began every meeting, usually, with a sacrifice. And that sacrifice was a sacrifice that was made to one of the heathen deities that they were attached to. And then, of course, even in the invitations references were made to the deities that were to be celebrated in their festivities around the tables. Generally speaking, they began with a cup of wine, but this cup of wine was poured out as a libation and an offering to the gods. So they not only had the sacrificed and the food that they ate was the food that had been sacrificed in honour of some of the gods, but even as they began their meals, there was a reference in their opening grace so to speak, to the Heathen Gods. And then, at the end of the meal, the same thing would take place. So, they were business gatherings in one sense, but in everything in their business gatherings the heathen gods were honoured. So, the problem at Thyatira was that here is a church that evidently is compromising, to some extent, the holy truth of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

This is not the first church whose trouble might be traced to someone who was like a witch. So, we're not surprised at this. Unless you think that we're paying special attention upon the women, let's remember how many false churches have started through men. So, we're not saying anything special. We're just saying that it pertains to both sexes, and in this case the one who was responsible for the troubles in Thyatira was a female called in the text, "That woman, Jezebel." Now, who was she? Well, obviously the name is a symbolic name. That was not her real name most likely, but she is looked at as one who represents in Thyatira something that Jezebel did in ancient times in the 9th Century. Jezebel was remembered from Sidon. Her father was a king and so she was a princess, and she was married to king Ahab. And she worshiped the Baals or a Baal god, and consequently, as you read *the Old Testament*, particularly 1 Kings and then even their references to her in 2 Kings, she was an individual who was an immoral person. As later on she was involved in witchcraft and whoredoms. The worship of Baal included sacrificing their own children and cultic prostitution- it was a very evil religion. But, nevertheless, the primary thing that Jezebel sought to do was to erect the worship of Baal into the worship of Yahweh-GOD, so that both could be worshiped together in the same worship. In other words, to dilute the once and for all character of the God of Israel, Yahweh, and now worship the Baal along with the Lord God. So, she did not wish to eliminate, or at least she did not publicly to eliminate the worship of Yahweh-GOD, she just wanted the individuals to worship Yahweh and Baal. We live in a pluralistic society. You can worship anyone if you want to, and that's supposed to be good, but that's not good for a Christian. So, Baal and God. She was Ahab's evil genius because she had evidently such control over him that this was allowed to continue. You know, when you look around you, and you look at the religion's that are about us, the common religions that we know and that we recognize. In effect, just allow us to be placed on the same level with Christianity as a pluralistic kind of worship. We would like to have that status. But you see, in Christianity the fundamental fact that Christianity sets forth is that there is one God, that's Yahweh, there is one way of

salvation through our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. In other words, Christianity is unique. It cannot be mixed with anything because if you mix it you destroy its character.

Well, Jezebel evidently believed that one should have the worship of Baal along with the worship of Yahweh, and she did everything that she possibly could to arrange for that. You know, of course, the climactic struggle between Elijah and Jezebel [1Kings 18], and the four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal, and the great struggle that took place on Mount Carmel when Elijah, by God's unique authority, overcame the prophets and slew them and established, for a time at least, the fact that the Lord God was the Lord God. Then Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah saying *"So may the gods do to me and even more, if I do not make your life as the life of one of them by tomorrow about this time."* And he was afraid and arose and ran for his life... (1 Kings 19:2-3a) This is one bad woman.

Now this is Jezebel. But what did she teach? Well, she taught two satanic doctrines. One, she taught that they should commit fornication. Notice the Revelation 2:24, "But unto you I say, unto the rest in Thyatira, as many as have not this doctrine, and which have not known the depths of Satan, as they speak; I will put upon you none other burden." But in the Revelation 2:20, "That woman Jezebel, she calls herself a prophetess, and she teaches and seduces my servants to commit fornication." These doctrines are the depths of Satan.

For in the Old Testament that term 'fornication' is used of those who worship the demons, or worship the idols, or worship the heathen Gods, a kind of religious fornication. Now, remember in the guilds, this was frequently what happened. Those feasts degenerated into this, and then of course all over the ancient world individuals were attached to the heathen temples, and fornication was one of the ways by which you worshiped a fertility god or goddess. And so, in order to worship truly it was said that one must have fornication with some of the temple prostitutes. So evidently all of this is involved in what is happening in Thyatira.

Now the God at Thyatira was Tyrimas or Tyrimnos. He was called by both, but he was simply an incarnation of the god Apollo. So, you would receive an invitation to the guild's festival, and it would read something like this, "Dine with us at the Temple of our Lord Tyrimnos." Now you can see a Christian involved in the guilds would be unable to answer an invitation like that. We couldn't come and dine with them at the table of the God Tyrimnos. No Christian could do that. But it was said, "Why not do that? After all, it's just a form." But no Christian, no true Christian, according to our Lord's teaching, could do that. You cannot under any circumstances sit down at a table in which the person to be honoured is a false god. A Christian cannot do that. His testimony is blighted immediately. And so, come dine with us at the table of our Lord Tyrimnos was an invitation that no Christian could accept.

9.4 THE THIRD WOMAN SITTING ON A SCARLET BEAST – REPRESENTS THE CITY OF MAN, BABYLON

So he carried me away in the spirit into the wilderness: and I saw a woman sit upon a scarlet coloured beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns. And the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet colour, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls, having a golden cup in her hand full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication: And upon her forehead was a name written, Mystery, Babylon The Great, The Mother Of Harlots And Abominations Of The Earth. And I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus: and when I saw her, I wondered with great admiration. (Revelation 17:3-6).

Purple and scarlet...the colours of royalty, nobility and wealth. The woman is portrayed as a prostitute who has successfully plied her trade and become extremely wealthy. Adorned...Prostitutes often dress in fine clothes and precious stones to allure their victims. (Proverbs 7:10). The religious harlot Babylon is no different, adorning herself to lure the nations into her grasp. Now if you'll take a look down at Revelation 17:18, at the conclusion of this chapter the apostle writes, " And the woman which thou sawest is that great city, which reigneth over the kings of the earth."

The woman of chapter seventeen, is in complete contrast to her rival of chapter twelve. The display of wealth and manner of dress are designed to enhance her personal beauty and glory. She has all the finery and precious things of earth, but nothing of heaven. She is Satan's agent in his war against Christ. This woman has on her forehead no crown, but her name of mystery: Babylon the great, the mother of harlots and of earth's abominations. Her shame is her crown. No one need really be deceived by her, for she proclaims her preference for the things of the flesh rather than the things of God.

Now let's turn to Zechariah 5:5-11 and we'll read one of Zechariah's visions, "Then the angel who was speaking with me went out and said to me, 'Lift up now your eyes and see what this is going forth.' And I said, 'What is it?' And he said, 'This is the ephah going forth.' Again he said, 'This is their appearance in all the land and behold, a lead cover was lifted up; and this is a woman sitting inside the ephah.' Then he said, 'This is Wickedness!' And he threw her down into the middle of the ephah and cast the lead weight on its opening. Then I lifted up my eyes and looked, and there two women were coming out with the wind in their wings; and they had wings like the wings of a stork, and they lifted up the ephah between the earth and the heavens."

Reference to the stork is very interesting in light of the fact that Pliny [ph4:51], many centuries ago, made the comment that one of the characteristic things of storks was to go back to their former nests, and so that would be very fitting for this particular prophecy. We read, "And they lifted up the ephah between the earth and the heavens and I said to the angel who was speaking with me, 'Where are they taking the ephah?' Then he said to me, 'To build a temple for her in the land of Shinar; and when it is prepared, she will be set there on her own pedestal." (Note that Shinar, is one of the terms for Babylon. Babylon was in the land of Shinar so that is a prophecy that has to do with Babylon and Babylonianism.)

We touch upon one of the most important, most astonishing, yet most neglected subjects in the Bible. Babylon, its origin, we have referred to that; its persistence, its demise in Old Testament times; its revival in Old Testament times; and its ultimately catastrophic destruction set forth both in the Old and the New Testaments. In fact, about ten chapters in the Bible are devoted to the subject of Babylon. Many of them, as you know from the reading of the Bible, are entire chapters; others significant parts of chapters. We are dealing with a subject from the standpoint of the content of the Scriptures is an important subject. The Bible, as we know, is one long admonition against idolatry. In fact, when Moses gave the law, the opening words as he recounts them are these: "Then God spoke all these words, saying, 'I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. You shall have no other gods before me. You shall not make for yourself an idol, or any likeness of what is in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the water under the earth. You shall not worship them or serve them; for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, on the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me, but showing lovingkindness to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments.'" And then in the New Testament times near the end of the completion of the Revelation found in the New Testament, the Apostle John, so far as we can tell, the last living author of Revelation, concludes the 5th chapter of his first epistle by saying, "Little children, guard yourselves from idols." So, it is true that the Bible is one long admonition against idolatry and Babylon is significant in that Babylonianism, Babylon is the source of organized rebellion against God. Going back to Genesis chapter 11 and the building of the tower of Babel,

when the Babylonians gathered together with their desire to build the tower, their purpose was unity. Their program was united effort and the principle that moved them was human glory, not divine glory, but human glory. Let's make for ourselves a name. It was, in fact, a program that they hoped would be something like a counterfeit of the Kingdom of God.

Perhaps Satan's earthly headquarters were at Babylon since there from easy access to the east or to the west and it would be an ideal place from which to counteract the influence of Jerusalem. We do know from Revelation 2: 13 in the message to Pergamum it is stated, "I know where you dwell, where Satan's throne is; and you hold fast My name, and did not deny My faith even in the days of Antipas, My witness, My faithful one, who was killed among you, where Satan dwelleth." In the Bible, these two great cities are set over against each other; the city of Babylon and the city of Jerusalem.

Now he says that "He saw the woman sitting on a scarlet beast, full of blasphemous names, having seven heads and ten horns." This beast is identical with the great dragon of chapter twelve, and he is that old serpent called the devil and Satan (Revelation 12 :9); so this woman is "the synagogue of Satan" (Revelation 2:9), the city and bride of the prince of this world (John 14:30). She sits on the seven heads of the dragon, the seven kings or kingdoms, and she sits upon "many waters," the peoples and nations and tongues of the world. (Revelation 17:15.) She is carried by the beast, rules over the kings of the earth, and is supported by the peoples of the world. The governments support her, the peoples sustain her, and the prince of darkness upholds this lady of his choice. This is her foundation and "light."

I suggest to you, that at this point, he's talking not primarily about the city, but not excluding the city, he's talking primarily about the city and the system, and the system, at this point, is prominent. The system found in the city of Babylon at that time seen as a woman and the fact that the system is seen as a woman is suggested by the temptation of Adam in the Garden of Eden by a woman. That appears to be the reason for the use of the figure. He's not trying to suggest that women are inferior, but in the biblical revelation and in the story of Genesis, that is helpful as a figure. So, the system is seen as a woman and that suggests the original fall in the Garden of Eden taking place through Eve and affecting also Adam. What this suggests also that the harlot sits upon the scarlet beast representative of the anti-Christ, is that the woman will dominate the politics of the ten-kingdom empire for a time, using the secular arm as a tool. Ultimately, the Book of Revelation tells us that the political beast, an anti-Christ, will overthrow the woman. We'll read about this in this very chapter. And that had used politics. We'll discover that politics destroys the religious arm as well. Babylon assures herself that she is happily married and that her husband and children will remain with her. She feels herself a queen, and no widow, and safe from sorrow. (Revelation 18 :7.) But all is not harmony in her house. The ten horns that you saw, said the angel to John, they and the beast will hate the harlot; they will make her desolate and naked, and devour her flesh and burn her with fire. (Revelation 17 :16) As a house divided against itself cannot stand, she is going to sure destruction.

In verse 4 through verse 6, John describes the woman, her appearance and her acts. He says, "And the woman was clothed in purple and scarlet", that tells you right in the beginning since purple dye and scarlet dye were very expensive and very hard to obtain, that we are talking about a commercial kind of relationship that is associated with luxury in its apostasy. So "the woman was clothed with purple and scarlet, and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls". It's not the 20th Century, it's not any century, it's designed to express to us the fact that characteristic of this union of the religious and the political arm is a kind of life that is characterized by luxury in apostasy. We do know from this Book of Revelation that in chapter 2 and verse 13 in the message to Pergamum it is stated, "I know where you dwell, where Satan's throne is; and you hold fast My name, and did not deny My faith even in the days of Antipas, My witness, My faithful one, who was killed among you, where Satan dwelleth." So the very fact that we have reference here to Satan's dwelling in Pergamum in the sense of the original text is that he has something of a permanent

home there; that there is some evidence that the Chaldean priesthood moved to Pergamum to carry on worship there and when Attalus the Third, who was a ruler over that part of Asia Minor, willed his kingdom to Rome then, of course, you have justification for saying that some of the characteristic religious practices also made their entry in Rome, but they were already in Rome even before that. When Julius Caesar assumed authority, he was made not simply the head of the state, but the head of the Roman religion and he was given the title of Pontifex Maximus.

Notice the combination of the two. She is great Babylon, Babylon the Great, and mother. Great and mother combine to show that the woman is the embodiment and the source, being the mother, the source of rebellious false religion without God. Now the system, in my opinion, goes beyond what we know as Romanism. As a matter of fact, it was not in existence as Romanism in John's day, so we're talking about something that's bigger than Romanism and bigger than Protestantism and is more original. It's the Babylonianism religion of separation from the Lord God and rebellion against Him. This is what John is speaking about. Notice the second thing that is said about her acts. "And I saw the woman drunk with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the witnesses of Jesus and when I saw her, I wondered greatly." So, we picture a woman, she is reeling with the blood of the saints as a kind of alcohol and drug that have caused her to reel. She is drunk with the blood of the witnesses of Jesus and the blood of the saints. Now, of course, the Apostle John, when he wrote this, he had already had some contact with Babylonianism in his day because Nero had been on the throne and Nero had persecuted the Christians, and that was well known, and many others also had as well. So, undoubtedly that was in the apostle's mind. But let us not forget that it is not the apostle who gives us the Book of Revelation. It is ultimately our Lord through the Apostle John. So "drunk with the blood of the saints and the blood of the witnesses" to our Lord, is even broader than anything that Nero might have done. Rome was known as a wicked, vile, corrupt city. There is no doubt that the important thing that comes to you as we look at these verses that we've looked at is the implicit admonition against Babylonian defiance of God. "He will tell those who are in Babylon to flee outside of the city" and surely that expresses the attitude that one has as he reads these things. He would want to do just exactly that. It's false safety to find any sense of assurance in anyone but the Lord God. The Bible proclaims the unequivocal separation from the deeds and the ideas of Babylonianism to seek the city of God and its holy order is our goal. When the Apostle Paul wrote to the Thessalonians, he reminded them that they had turned from the idols to serve the living and the true God and to wait for His Son from heaven. What better picture could one have of true conversion in Christ? That we have turned from the idols to serve the living and true God. The idols that represent our failure to worship the Lord God: materialism, ambition, a sense of things that cloud of vision of the Lord and cause us to have priorities that are not the priorities of the truth of God in the word of God.

It's very instructive that the woman is called the great harlot because you know from the reading of the Bible, and here's an instance incidentally of how important it is to read the Bible over and over again that you might understand the Bible, and this book especially, the great harlot, harlotry in the Old Testament, if you read through the Old Testament, you could not help but see because it is so often, harlotry is devotion paid to illicit lovers. Well you might say, "Well, yes, of course. Harlotry is devotion paid to an illicit lover." But as the man who commits adultery with a prostitute, engages in harlotry and he has given devotion to an illicit lover (the licit lover is his wife), but he has engaged in adultery with a prostitute. Harlotry, yes, but, of course, in the Old Testament, that forms an illustration of spiritual adultery, spiritual harlotry. So, harlotry is devotion paid to illicit lovers, true, but it's the standing symbol of religious apostasy and debauched worship. If we read Jeremiah chapter 3; Hosea chapters 1 and 2; and other passages in the Old Testament we find that God frequently warns and then condemns Israel for their harlotry of turning to false gods, to rendering to the false gods the devotion that they should render to Yahweh, the true God. You find many illustrations of this in the history of Israel. When Israel ran to Egypt for help, they were engaging in spiritual harlotry. When they went for help to Assyria, they were engaging in spiritual harlotry. When they went for help to Babylon, they were

engaging in spiritual harlotry. When the Maccabees appealed to Rome against Syria, they were engaging in spiritual harlotry. Someone has even suggested that in our times today, Zionism has engaged in spiritual harlotry too because when Zionism came into existence for help in the founding of the nation Israel in Palestine, they first turned to the Sultan of Turkey. And then second, they turned to the Kaiser of Germany. Then they turned to England. In other words, in the very foundations of the country in the land, there was spiritual harlotry in the sense that they did not simply turn to the Lord God and expect Him to do the miracle for them.

Now what makes this so bad is the fact that God regards this as a horrible sin. Listen to what he says about the worship of the false gods. He says, "It's this abominable thing that I hate." The idols are called abominations and He calls it an abomination that He hates. And, of course, in addition to the actual worship of a false god, there were also the vile practices associated with them for the literal, physical adultery was often associated with the spiritual adultery as part of the worship of the fertility gods. So, when we read here of the great harlot, we are talking about illicit love. That is, she represents illicit love, illicit worship. Now he says, "With whom the kings of the earth committed acts of immorality, and those who dwell on the earth were made drunk with the wine of her immorality." Seduced by her splendid, but foul attractiveness, they indulge in her vile worship of idols. General idolatry existed on the earth, but it existed in Israel and will exist in the end times. In chapter 9 and verse 20 of this book we read, "And the rest of mankind, who were not killed by these plagues, did not repent of the works of their hands, so as not to worship demons, and the idols of gold and of silver and of brass and of stone and of wood, which can neither see nor hear nor walk." In other words, Babylonianism persists right down to the end. Now secondly, John points us to the vision of the woman in verse 3. He says, "And he carried me away in the Spirit into a wilderness; and I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast, full of blasphemous names, having seven heads and ten horns." He's now to see the coming judgment of the harlot. He's in a state of ecstasy for he says in the 3rd verse, "He carried me away in the Spirit". So, in the mind of Scripture, we have on the one hand, Babylon, the apostate city, from whence have come all of the evils that have infiltrated true worship down through the centuries. And on the other hand, we have the holy city, the city of the new Jerusalem. So, these things are obviously opposed one to another. "He carried me away then in the Spirit into the wilderness." Now that's an appropriate setting for a vision of judgment, the wilderness. Not heaven, but the wilderness. It's suitable for Babylon likened in the Old Testament to that very thing. Incidentally, this is probably a clue that we are not talking about the ancient city of Rome at this point, but primarily of the system because Rome was anything but a wilderness.

9.5 THE FOURTH WOMAN THE WIFE OF THE LAMB - REPRESENTS THE CITY OF GOD, ZION / JERUSALEM

[The New Jerusalem] *"And there came unto me one of the seven angels which had the seven vials full of the seven last plagues, and talked with me, saying, Come hither, I will shew thee the bride, the Lamb's wife. And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and shewed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, (Revelation 21:9-10).*

Israel was certainly espoused to God (note, God) and became His wife. Because of her rejection of His Word and will, Israel was abandoned as an adulterous wife. Later on, she will become Jehovah's restored wife (Isaiah 54:6, 7; 62:4, 5). Those who advocate that Israel is the Bride erroneously teach that "wife" is her earthly title and "bride" her heavenly designation. Scriptures proves that God cast Israel off as a wife, and that it is impossible for Him to marry her as a "virgin" (Jeremiah 3:1-18; Ezekiel 16; Hosea 2; 3:1-5). In Matthew 22:2; 25:6, 10; 2 Corinthians 11:2 we read on the emblem of the heavenly Bridegroom and Bride. Perfect union with Him personally and participation in His holiness, joy, glory and kingdom are included in this symbol of 'marriage' [Song of Solomon everywhere]. Now, Israel was a widow and childless, and she was desolate and forsaken. She was as a wife of youth who had been refused, and she wandered to and fro. (Isaiah

54:1-6; 49:21) But her Redeemer came and bought her back, and her Maker became her husband. "The God of the whole earth shall He be called" (Isaiah 54:5), and she *received* a new name, Hephzibah, "My delight is in her." Her children keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus, and they are therefore persecuted. (Revelation 12:17) These children are virgins (Revelation 14:4), and they are undefiled with women; that is, with the woman of chapter seventeen and her daughters. They overcame their persecutors by the blood of the Lamb, and the word of their testimony, and they are called the holy people, the redeemed of the Lord. (Isaiah 62:12)

These two women are two cities—the city of this world and the city of the world to come. The one is called Zion (Isaiah 66:7-8); and the other is named Babylon, the great city that rules over the kings of the earth (Revelation 17:18). Zion is pure and undefiled, but Babylon is a harlot. Of right Zion belongs to God, for He created her, but she has given herself to Satan. Zion will be established forever, but Babylon will be destroyed. (Revelation 21: 2-3; 18:21)

Looking at the word of God, there are a number of places that make this comment, I think, justifiable, that Jerusalem [Zion] was God's elect city from ancient times. From Jerusalem, there would ultimately come the truth of God. You read the prophets such as Isaiah the 2nd chapter, "And in the days of the Kingdom of God men shall go to Jerusalem because the word of the Lord shall go from Jerusalem out to the whole of the world." In Ezekiel 5:5 we read these words, "Thus says the Lord God: 'This is Jerusalem; I have set her at the center of the nations, with lands around her.'" So, when we think of Jerusalem, we think of the city of God and, in fact, the new Jerusalem still plays upon that particular sense of the term Jerusalem. Jerusalem was called something like the navel of the world and in medieval maps, it was recognized. Their maps were often made with Jerusalem at the center of the whole world because Ezekiel had said, "I have set Jerusalem in the midst of the nations." There is a tablet in the British Museum on which this city is represented as the center of the world. The navel of the world may still be seen today in the Greek Choir of the Church of the Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem. In medieval times, maps were often constructed with the countries of the world placed around Jerusalem as their center, an obvious derivation from the text from Ezekiel that we have just read. But in any way, we can understand how maps were made in the light of this, but in this instance, there is some justification from the word of God for it. It's interesting to know that the Garden of Eden was located in the general area of what is today Iraq and Babylon's ancient location.

The consummation of the relationships between the Bridegroom and the Bride is still to her an anticipation yet to be realized. He has espoused her to Himself: the wedding day awaits His imminent return. It would be normal for her to be looking and longing for His return. Such an attitude is rightly to be expected where any real love for Him exists. His return, however, and the celestial union with His Bride will not await the results of the meagre power of her poor love for Him. All the divine purpose in calling her out, the present tender grace expended in her behalf, like His certain return, are dependent only on His love for her. This is a "love that passeth knowledge." Here is sufficient motive to insure the accomplishment of all that the divine wisdom and power can perfect. By no less a perfection will His Bride appear in glory. She, because He is able, will be presented faultless before the presence of His glory to His own exceeding joy (Jude 24).

Among the many marvellous scenes John witnessed was that of "the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband" (Revelation 21:2). In Revelation 21:9 this glorious city is identified as the Bride, the wife of the Lamb. The glorified church, then, is both a city and a bride. She is "the city of God" in that she represents the sum of perfected individuals. In her love and unity, she is the "Bride." The Bride and the city are identical, thus the New Jerusalem is to be the home and residence of the Bride. She is to be the

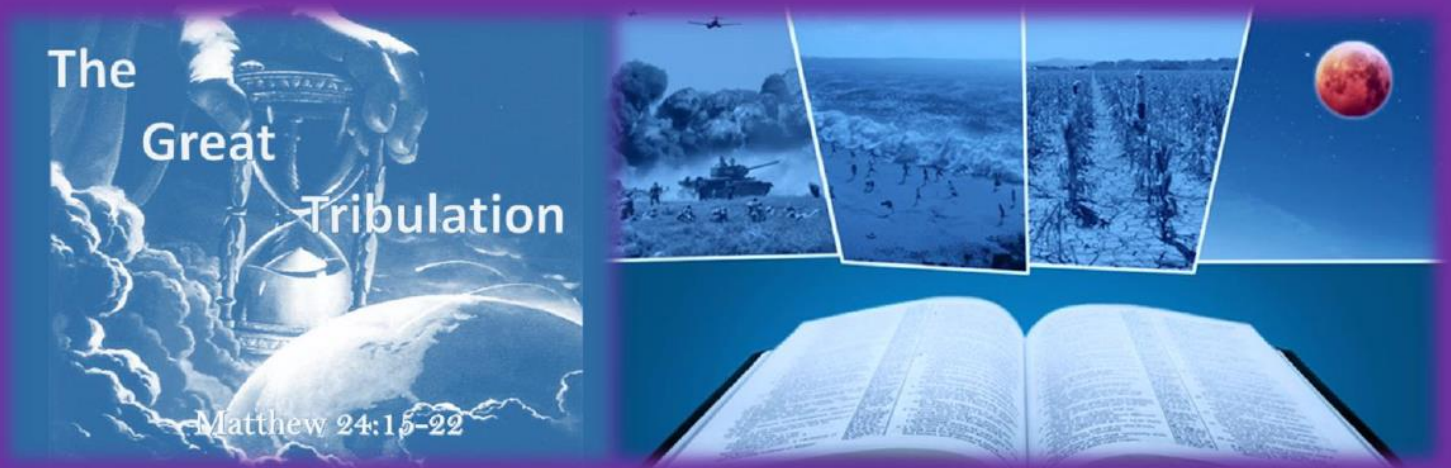
prominent center of the city and saved nations are to partake of her blessedness (Revelation 21:24). Her brightness is to supply the light they will walk in. Indwelt by her Lord, she will be the medium of blessings to the new earth (Luke 19:17, 19). The church is to stand out as the most magnificent of all created works. In the description John gives us of perfect unity, the church's governmental relationship to the Lamb is noted. God's eternal home is to be in the capital city of the new creation. Here is the center of divine presence and the government of all in the universe of God and the Lamb. With each view of the city the Lamb is named and the sevenfold reference (Revelation 21:9, 14, 22, 23, 27; 22:1-3) indicates that although Christ delivers up the kingdom of God, He yet shares it with the redeemed.

9.6 CONCLUSION

In the Book of Revelation, we find four female figures throughout the Book of Revelation: 'Jezebel' (Chapter 2), the unnamed woman "clothed with the sun" (Chapter 12), 'Babylon' (Chapter 17), and 'Jerusalem' (Chapter 21 & 22). This revelation of the four women is of personal interest to everyone. Two of these women are depicted positively (the unnamed woman and 'Jerusalem') and two negatively ('Jezebel' and 'Babylon'). There are strong links between the positive figures and between the negative figures and these linked pairs over against one another. By closely linking the negative women, 'Jezebel' and 'Babylon', and by setting them over against the positive women, we see Christian rival on the side of evil and, second, 'Jezebel' indirectly by maligning 'Babylon'. All of us are children of the one [positive figure], or of the other [negative figure]. We are citizens of Zion or of Babylon. To which city do you own allegiance? Which of the two women do you claim as your mother? Whose clothing and adornment do you wear? Who is your prince—that ruler of the darkness of this world, or the Sun of Righteousness? This is a question not to be valued in dollars. Life itself is at stake. Everyone desires life and liberty, and they are his right. The revelation of these four women shows plainly where life and liberty are to be found. They are certainly not in Babylon, the murderess of the saints. They are found in Zion [Jerusalem], the city of God and the fountain of truth. Let us put on her robes, be established on her foundation, and walk in her light, that we may live with her and enjoy her liberty and share her glory forever.

CHAPTER X

The Great Tribulation



10.1 INTRODUCTION

Jesus said there would be a period of great tribulation before His coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. What is the Great Tribulation? Why this unprecedented time of troubles? The word “tribulation” is translated from the Greek word *thlipsis*, which means “metaphorically oppression, affliction, tribulation, distress, straits”. The oppression of God’s people has ebbed and flowed for centuries following Jesus’ death. And the Bible explains that there will also be a future period of tribulation before Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. (Matthew 24:29-30).

In Matthew 24: 4-7, we read one of Jesus’ most extensive explanations of what will occur during the end times prior to His coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. First Jesus explained that there would be religious deception, wars, famines, pestilences and earthquakes before His coming. Then Jesus said, “They will deliver you up to *tribulation* and kill you, and you will be hated by all nations for My name’s sake”.

Just before this end-time tribulation, Jesus warned, ““Therefore when you see the “abomination of desolation,” spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place’ (whoever reads, let him understand), ‘then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains’” (Matthew 24: 15-16). This prophecy has had two previous fulfilments, at the time Antiochus Epiphanes desecrated the temple in 167 B.C. and when the Romans destroyed the temple in A.D. 70. But Jesus’ prophecy clearly places this final fulfilment in the time just before His coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. Luke adds, “But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation is near” (Luke 21:20). Again, the Roman destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 is a foreshadowing of the end-time events.

10.2 THE GREAT TRIBULATION?

In Matthew 24:21-22 Jesus said: “For then there will be *great tribulation*, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be. And unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect’s sake those days will be shortened”. This time of suffering and death is called the Great Tribulation because its severity will surpass all previous periods of suffering experienced throughout human history.

This time of travail and misery is also called “the time of Jacob’s trouble” (Jeremiah 30:7), because this great travail will *first* come to Jacob, also called Israel, meaning the modern descendants of the 12 tribes of Israel in the last days. The prophet Daniel described this same period of time saying, “And there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation” (Daniel 12:1).

10.3 WHY THE GREAT TRIBULATION?

Why will God allow this Great Tribulation? This is perhaps the most essential question of all. God is a long-suffering and merciful God. But just as a loving father corrects his wayward son, so God will bring this severe punishment if warnings are not heeded and widespread sins are not repented of.

The focus of this tribulation will come first upon the nations that have historically had a Judeo-Christian heritage. God declares that before the end of the age, if the modern descendants of ancient Israel don’t make a real return to Him, He will chastise them for their sins. The peoples of these nations largely represent those to whom He previously gave His laws and statutes, and God wanted them to be beacons of godly behaviour to the rest of the world. The peoples of these nations are the ones God has historically called His people. Because they have forgotten their God,

He will send a series of natural plagues and disasters to get their attention. If this doesn't work, these curses will intensify over a period of time.

If these people refuse to repent, God warns that He will send harsh foreign invaders to bring His judgments against them. God warned through Jeremiah, "I will correct you in justice. ... With the chastisement of a cruel one, for the multitude of your iniquities, because your sins have increased" (Jeremiah 30:11, 14).

10.4 WARNING TO JERUSALEM AND NATIONS THAT HARM ISRAEL

The prophet Ezekiel spoke of this future time of Great Tribulation as it pertains to residents of Jerusalem before Christ's return. This city—the former capital city of the 12 tribes of Israel—is representative of the nations and peoples who have been given the blessing of having the 10 Commandments as the foundation for their national constitutions and codes of conduct. God speaks to these people who should know better, saying: "Because you have multiplied disobedience more than the nations that are all around you, have not walked in My statutes nor kept My judgments, nor even done according to the judgments of the nations that are all around you. ... "Indeed I, even I, am against you and will execute judgments in your midst in the sight of the nations. And I will do among you what I have never done, and the like of which I will never do again, because of all your abominations. Therefore, fathers shall eat their sons in your midst, and sons shall eat their fathers; and I will execute judgments among you, and all of you who remain I will scatter to all the winds" (Ezekiel 5:7-10). "Surely, because you have defiled My sanctuary with all your detestable things and with all your abominations, therefore I will also diminish you; My eye will not spare, nor will I have any pity. One-third of you shall die of the pestilence, and be consumed with famine in your midst; and one-third shall fall by the sword all around you; and I will scatter another third to all the winds, and I will draw out a sword after them" (Ezekiel 5:11-12). Scripture explains that God has great long-suffering with humanity before His anger reaches such a critical point (2 Peter 3:9; Romans 2:4-11). The Great Tribulation represents a time when this point will have been reached with nations that have no excuse because they have been amply warned.

One purpose for God allowing the Great Tribulation to occur will be to humble the physical nations that have descended from biblical Israel and lead them to repentance. At the end of this tribulation period, indications are that God will see a change of heart among the survivors of His people Israel. He will then retaliate on those cruel nations in measure for their heartless treatment toward His people. God warns the other nations in advance: "Therefore all those who devour you shall be devoured; and all your adversaries, every one of them, shall go into captivity; those who plunder you shall become plunder, and all who prey upon you I will make a prey" (Jeremiah 30:16). After Israel is disciplined, God will avenge His people. This is described in numerous other prophecies in the Bible, including Deuteronomy 32:43; Isaiah 35:3-4; Isaiah 47:5-15; Joel 3:12-15; Jeremiah 25:29-33; and Ezekiel 25-28.

10.5 HOW LONG WILL BE THE GREAT TRIBULATION?

The Great Tribulation is prophesied to last 42 months (Revelation 11:2; Revelation 13:5), 1,260 days (Revelation 11:3) and "a time, and times, and half a time" (Revelation 12:14; Daniel 12:7). Space does not permit a detailed explanation of why the prophetic term "time" usually means a year and the plural "times" in this setting means two years; but here we see in a number of passages several different ways to express the length of time of the same event. Therefore, when we see the time spans given as 42 months, 1,260 days and "a time, times and half a time," we can conclude that they all refer to the same 3½ years.

10.6 WHO WILL BE AFFECTED BY THE GREAT TRIBULATION?

Through several prophets, God identified the peoples who would primarily be affected by this coming crisis. God explained to Jeremiah that this terrible time would come upon Israel and Judah (Jeremiah 30:4). The modern-day descendants of these people include the predominantly English-speaking Christian-professing nations and the Jewish peoples today. And as we have already noted, Jesus Christ warned His faithful followers that this coming period of tribulation would be a dangerous time for true Christians as well. Jesus' instruction—"then they will deliver you up to tribulation and kill you, and you will be hated by all nations for My name's sake" (Matthew 24:9)—will be fulfilled at the end of this age in the fifth seal of the book of Revelation (Revelation 6:9-11).

But this unprecedented time of trouble will not just affect the descendants of Israel and the Church. Tribulation will threaten the existence of human life on the earth! Today, a number of weapons of mass destruction and other existential threats could bring human extinction. In Mark's parallel account, Jesus says, "For in those days there will be tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the creation which God created until this time, nor ever shall be. And unless the Lord had shortened those days, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect's sake, whom He chose, He shortened those days" (Mark 13:19-20). God calls people into His Church today to be those elect—those who help pray fervently for God's Kingdom to come (Matthew 6:10), who promote the preaching of the gospel of the Kingdom of God around the world (Matthew 24:14), those who are faithful and wise servants, preparing and watching for Christ's return (Matthew 24: 45-47).

10.7 CONCLUSION

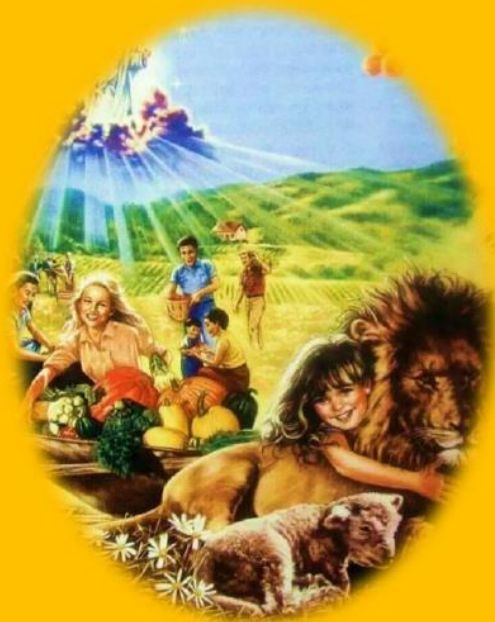
Jesus Christ gave a warning to be sure we are heeding His life-transforming message of repentance, faith and righteousness. In Luke's Gospel Christ told His followers, "So you also, when you see these things happening [the signs He described], know that the kingdom of God is near" (Luke 21:31-32). Jesus also said, "Watch therefore, and pray always that you may be counted worthy to escape all these things that will come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man" (Luke 21: 36).

One purpose for God allowing the Great Tribulation to occur will be to humble the physical nations that have descended from biblical Israel and lead them to repentance. After this period of correction, Christ will be coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory and the survivors of these Israelite nations will undergo a complete transformation. They will become a holy people and an example to all the other nations on earth (Zephaniah 3:11-13). At the end of the 42 months of tribulation God says of these people: "But one-third shall be left in [the land]: I will bring the one-third through the fire [by deportation into captivity by foreign nations], will refine them as silver is refined, and test them as gold is tested. They will call on My name, and I will answer them. I will say, 'This is My people'; and each one will say, 'The LORD is my God'" (Zechariah 13:8-9).

There are very encouraging words in the Bible for those who desire to obey God. The apostle John received a vision from God showing that from among these greatly oppressed people, a great multitude will be spiritually purified through the coming trial upon all lands and peoples—the nations of Israel first and then the rest of the nations. The book of Revelation describes those who turn to God from the modern nations of Israel and from other nations as "ones who [have] come out of the *great tribulation*, and washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb" (Revelation 7:14).

CHAPTER XI

The truth about the 1000 Year Reign of Jesus Christ on Earth



11.1 INTRODUCTION

There is a biblical truth that promises a world of peace and prosperity for all. It is the scriptural teaching of the 1,000-year reign of Jesus Christ on earth. The first explicit statements that the Kingdom of God will reign on earth for a thousand years appear toward the end of the Bible, in the book of Revelation. Revelation 19 describes the return of Jesus Christ, coming in glory and power to take over the kingdoms of this world and to institute a new, just reign here on earth (Revelation 19:11-16). He will put down rebellion, remove the last human empire ruling on earth and institute the reign of the government of God for the 1,000-year. Moreover, in Old Testament we also read of the impact the ruling Kingdom of God will have during the 1000 years in areas that include world peace, economic stability, the restoration of true education and right values, the role of the resurrected saints, the roles of various physical nations and even changes in the nature of animals. This is going to be a wonderful and exciting time—something we can eagerly look forward to.

In an unstable world threatened by wars, terrorism, weather disturbances and natural disasters, the concept of a *1,000-year* period of peace fascinates us. It's not surprising that people should be curious about the future. What is surprising is how little true information is available about this spoken of in the Bible and how little most people understand about the topic.

11.2 WHO WILL BE ON THE EARTH DURING THE 1000 YEAR OF REIGN OF JESUS CHRIST?

Those remaining on the earth during the 1,000-year reign of Jesus Christ on earth will be the good people of the earth—those who were righteous and just, regardless of their religion. This includes those who will be on the earth at the time of the next coming of Jesus Christ as well as those who will be resurrected at that time and other times throughout the 1,000-year reign of Jesus Christ on earth. The wicked will not remain on the earth and will not be resurrected until after the 1,000-year reign of Jesus Christ on earth.

In the book of Revelation, the apostle John records that in the next coming of Jesus Christ, the saints will reign with Him for 1,000 years. Here's what it says: "And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them. Then I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received his mark on their foreheads or on their hands. "And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years ... blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years" (Revelation 20:4).

During the 1,000-year reign of Jesus Christ on earth, the saints will have immortal bodies. They will be something like God in that they will have bodies that cannot die. God, however, is everywhere all the time. The saints will not have that particular ability; however, they could be in another location very quickly. Their bodies will function beyond their present abilities. They could be in Jerusalem in one instant; they could be in India in one instant; they could be in China in another instant.

Revelation 20: 6 says, "Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection." This verse is speaking of the resurrection of the just. It is speaking of the resurrection of the righteous. Those who take part in the first resurrection will appear with Christ, and it is then that they will receive the job that they will perform during the thousand years. The second death has no power over them, as once they have been resurrected, they will be immortal. There will be no more death for them! It goes on to say, "They shall be priests unto God and of Christ, and they shall reign with

Him.” They will not be as strangers, or pilgrims, or street walkers. They will reign! The word “reign” means to rule. They will rule with Christ for a thousand years!

11.3 WHAT WILL HAPPEN DURING THE 1000 YEAR OF REIGN OF JESUS CHRIST?

Isaiah’s words have crystallized the idea of the 1000-year reign of Jesus Christ. What is described here is a complete change in all parts of this world—a time when the nature of wild animals will be changed. A child will walk among them in safety with no fear. And this passage further shows, in light of the last verse here, that even the nature of man will be changed!

“The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, the leopard shall lie down with the young goat, the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. The cow and the bear shall graze; their young ones shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. The nursing child shall play by the cobra’s hole, and the weaned child shall put his hand in the viper’s den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain, for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea” (Isaiah 11:6-9).

Through the Word of God, we understand that Daniel prophetically saw the coming of this Kingdom (Daniel 2:45). It is a beautiful revelation. Here was a man whom God gave the vision of this coming Kingdom! Imagine that. Daniel saw the Stone cut from the mountains without hands, which means that the Lord Jesus Christ was born without an earthly father, and He saw the Stone smite the empires (world powers) and destroy them completely. It says the Stone filled all the earth. We will be coming to that time soon. Daniel saw this 2,500 years ago.

11.4 WHEN THE 1000 YEAR OF REIGN OF JESUS CHRIST WILL HAPPEN?

Let’s take a look at those passages that speak of a “thousand years.” There are two - three passages in the Bible that speak of a thousand years (Psalm 90:4; 2 Peter 3:8 and Revelation 20:1-7). Psalm 90:4 tells us that “a thousand years in Your sight are like yesterday when it is past, and like a watch in the night.” For God, the passage of time is different from the way we experience it. Being eternal, and not dependent on food, water and other physical factors, God views time differently. The apostle Peter adds to the thought: “But, beloved, do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day” (2 Peter 3:8). These are not talking about a thousand years. The other is Revelation 20:1-7. There, in vivid picture language, the author describes only two things happening during a thousand-year period:

- Satan is hindered
- Believers reign with Christ

These two things are happening right now! Satan is hindered by the preaching of the gospel (1 John 3:8). Believers are reigning with Christ (John 5:24). These two things began to happen just after Jesus rose from the dead. These two things will continue happening until Jesus comes again in glory to judge the living and the dead. From the very beginning of the book, Revelation describes itself as the kind of literature in which the numbers are to be interpreted, not taken at face value. A thousand years is simply a long and complete period of time, the time in which people who come to faith in Jesus as their Saviour are counted as kings (1 Peter 2:9). Limiting Jesus’ reign to a thousand years is a serious mistake. How long does He actually reign? If we read the Scriptures, we know the answer. “And he shall reign forever and ever” (Revelation 11:15)!

11.5 CONCLUSION

The truth of Christ's reign on earth connects with some of the Bible's earliest statements. It is found in virtually all the Hebrew prophets. God's promise of His 1,000-year reign on earth stands as a symbol of hope for all mankind. The reign of the 1,000-year period of peace and righteousness following the next coming of Jesus Christ, who will reign over the earth forever and ever. The book of Revelation makes it clear: "Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years" (Revelation 20:6). Those resurrected in the first resurrection, at the beginning of the thousand years, will no longer be subject to death. AMEN!

CHAPTER XII

Who will be in the New Heaven
and the New Earth?



12.1 BACKGROUND

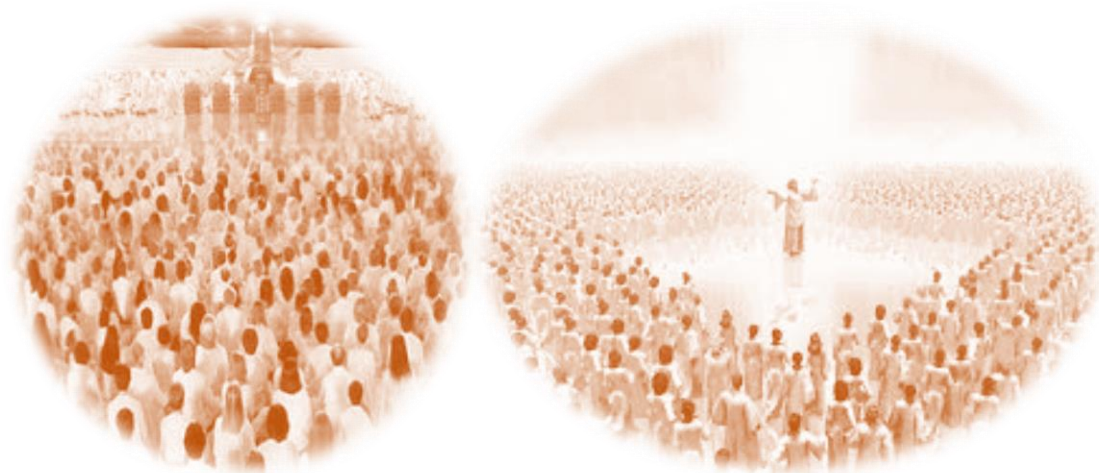
And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful (Revelation 21:5). Psalm 95:8-11 says, "Don't be stubborn, as your ancestors were at Meribah, as they were that day in the desert at Massah. There they put me to the test and tried me, although they had seen what I did for them. For forty years I was disgusted with those people. I said, 'How disloyal they are! They refuse to obey my commands.' I was angry and made a solemn promise: 'You will never enter the land where I would have given you rest.'"

The bible reveals that there were 603550 men from twenty years and above who came up from Egypt (Number 1:46), who begun a journey 40 years earlier. However, Joshua (at the age of 80-85 years) and Caleb (at the age of 40 years) were the only adult Israelites in that first generation who went "into the fullness" of God's calling. No one from 20 years and above made it except for those two. People gave birth to more children on the 40-year journey who made it to Canaan (a total of 601730 men of 20 years and above reached the promised land), but only two of the original crowd made it (Number 26:51). Even Moses and Aaron could not enter and died in sight of the land they had desired to enter. (Deuteronomy 32:48-52; 34:1-5). They could not enter because both of them were unfaithful to God and trespassed against the God in the presence of the people of Israel. When Moses was at the waters of Meribah, near the town of Kadesh in the wilderness of Zin, he dishonoured God in the presence of the people.

12.2 WHO WILL BE IN THE NEW HEAVEN AND THE NEW EARTH

During end times following categories of people or souls will be in the New Heaven and the New Earth:

12.2.1 Only 144,000 people from 12 tribes of Israel who will be marked with God's seal (Lamb's name and his Father's name) on their forehead (Revelation 7:3-8; 14: 1). They are the people who will stand before the throne, the four living creatures, and the elders; they will be singing a new song, which only they could learn. Of the whole human race, they will be the only ones who will be redeemed. They will be the men who will keep themselves pure by not having sexual relations with women; they will be virgins. They will be following the Lamb wherever he goes. They will be redeemed from the rest of the human race and will be the first ones to be offered to God and to the Lamb. They will never be known to tell lies; they will be faultless. (Revelation 14: 3-5)



12.2.2. There will be an enormous crowd—no one can count all the people! They will be from every race, tribe, nation, and language, and they will stand in front of the throne and of the Lamb, dressed in white robes and holding palm branches in their hands. They will call out in a loud voice: “Salvation comes from our God, who sits on the throne, and from the Lamb!” All the angels will stand around the throne, the elders, and the four living creatures. Then they will throw themselves face downward in front of the throne and will worshiped God, saying, “Amen! Praise, glory, wisdom, thanksgiving, honour, power, and might belong to our God forever and ever! Amen!” These are the people who will come safely through the terrible persecution. They will wash their robes and made them white with the blood of the Lamb. That is why they will stand before God’s throne and will serve him day and night in his temple. He who sits on the throne will protect them with his presence. Never again will they hunger or thirst; neither sun nor any scorching heat will burn them, because the Lamb, who is in the center of the throne, will be their shepherd, and he will guide them to springs of life-giving water. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.” (Revelation 7: 9-17)



12.2.3 The souls of those who had been executed because they had proclaimed the truth that Jesus revealed and the word of God. They had not worshiped the beast or its

image, nor had they received the mark of the beast on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and ruled as kings with Christ for a thousand years. (The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were over.)

This is the first raising of the dead. Happy and greatly blessed are those who are included in this first raising of the dead. The second death has no power over them; they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and they will rule with him for



a thousand years. (Revelation 20: 1-6). During these years the dragon will be seized, that ancient serpent—that is, the Devil, or Satan—and will be chained up for a thousand years. The angel will

throw him into the abyss, will lock it, and seal it, so that he cannot deceive the nations any more until the thousand years are over. (Revelation 20: 2-3)

12.2.4 The dead will be judged according to their deed, as recorded in the books.

After the thousand years are over, Satan will be set loose from his prison, and he will go out to deceive the nations scattered over the whole world, that is, Gog and Magog. Satan will bring them all together for battle, as many as the grains of sand on the seashore. They spread out over the earth and surrounded the camp of God's people and the city that he loves. But fire came down from heaven and destroyed them. Then the Devil, who deceived them, will be thrown into the lake of fire and sulfur, where the beast and the false prophet had already been thrown; and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever. On the final judgement earth and heaven will hover from His presence and will be seen no more. The dead, great and small alike, will be standing before the throne. Books will be opened including the book of the living. The dead will be judged according to their deed, as recorded in the books. Then the sea will give up its dead. Death and the world of the dead also will give up the dead they will held. And all will be judged according to their deed. Then death and the world of the dead will be thrown into the lake of fire. (This lake of fire is the second death.) Those who will not have their name written in the book of the living will be thrown into the lake of fire. (Revelation 20:7-15)



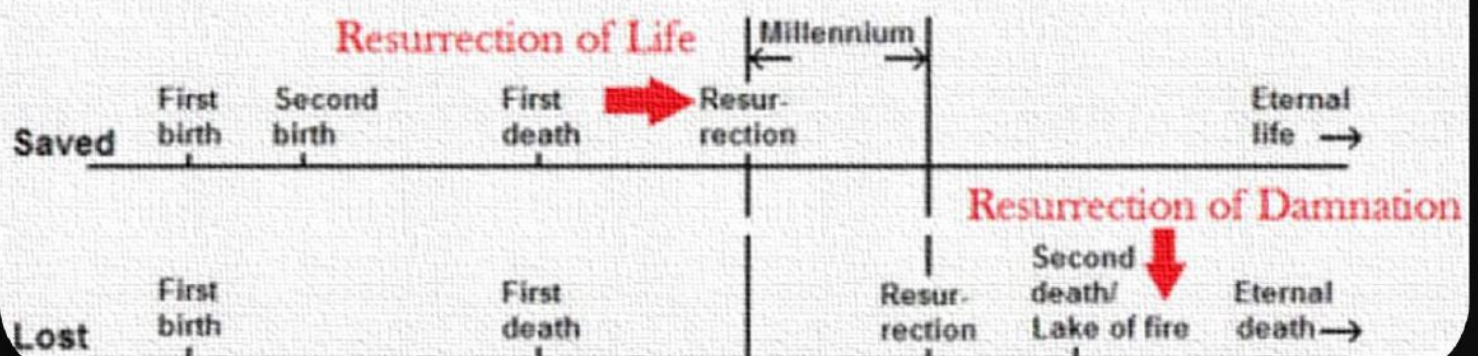
12.3 CONCLUSION

Revelation 21:1-4 says that the first heaven and the first earth will disappear, and the sea will vanish. The Holy City, the new Jerusalem will come down out of heaven from God. It is instructed to be prepared and ready, like a bride dressed to meet her husband. Then a loud voice will speak from the throne: "Now God's home is with people! He will live with them, and they shall be his people. God himself will be with them, and he will be their God. He will wipe away all tears from their eyes. There will be no more death, no more grief or crying or pain. The old things will disappear."

CHAPTER XIII

What is Your Destiny--- Born
Once and Die Twice or Born
Twice and Die Once!

Births, Deaths and Resurrections



13.1 INTRODUCTION

Born again! – When I was studying the book of Revelation and I came across this saying; “Born once, die twice - Born twice, die once.” I thought about it briefly and realized the spiritual truth behind this saying. I want to share this truth with you today. From the Garden of Eden until now, only two people are recorded to have evaded death: Enoch and Elijah. Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him. (Genesis 5:24) In other words, Enoch walked so closely with God, that when his life was winding up [365 years; Genesis 5:23], the Lord simply took him. He did not cross the threshold of death. When Elijah had reached the end of his time he and Elisha were walking, and it came to pass, as they still went on, and talked, that, behold, there appeared a chariot of fire, and horses of fire, and parted them both asunder; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven. [2 Kings 2:11] Not even Moses escaped death. David’s tomb remains to this day. Death is an inescapable fact of life. Every airplane that takes flight must eventually touch down again, and every baby that comes into this world must one day leave it.

Just as there are two births, the Bible teaches there are two deaths: one is physical, and the other is spiritual. Jesus warned that we are to fear the second death more than the first one. From the beginning until now, the dead have been buried in the ground, swallowed up by the sea, and burned in funeral pyres. The exit of the soul from the body marks what we call death. This is really just the first death. There will be a second death for many. Daniel prophesied concerning the dead: and many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. [Daniel 12:2]

When the wicked dead awake to shame and everlasting contempt, they will taste of the second death. First of all, death and hell will be cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death [Revelation 20:14]. Moreover, the second death is mentioned again in Revelation 21:8, which says, Then the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death. The second death is an eternal death from which there is no escape.

13.2 BORN ONCE AND DIE TWICE

This is the category of persons those who have experienced a physical birth but reject Jesus offer of pardon for their sins. These individuals will die in their sins and forfeit the opportunity to obtain eternal life: (i) Physical Birth, (ii) Physical Death, and (iii) Eternal Death. These persons will die while still in possession of their sins and wait in hell for their individual judgment. Because they rejected God’s offer to remove their sins, these persons will stand before God at the Great White Throne Judgement that is described in the Book of Revelation, Chapter 21. All those who die in their sins without the appropriation of Jesus’ death to remove their sins, will be found guilty and die a second time. This “Second Death,” can only be experienced by the unsaved who have rejected Jesus’ offer to take away their sins.

For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our lord. (Romans 6:23). There are several states referred to as "death" in the Bible. There is "physical death". This is the one we usually mean by the term. The Bible points out that the physical body is dead when the spirit separates from it [James 2:26]. There is also "spiritual death". This is the state that describes sinners who are separated from God by their sins [Ephesians 2:1;12]. It was in this sense that Adam and Eve died in the very day they disobeyed God. They died spiritually, and also became subject to physical death.

Finally, there is the "second death". This is the eternal state of alienation from God described in Revelation 20:11-15; the "lake of fire". There is much we do not know about this last state

mentioned, but we do know enough to understand that it would be the worst tragedy to suffer such a plight. There are many passages which describe the "second death" (Revelation 21:8; 20:10; 14:9-11; Mark 9:42-48; Matthew 25:30,41,46; 22:13).

For those born once, they will die twice. At the end of the one thousand year reign of Jesus upon the earth, the unsaved who have been waiting in hell for their judgement, will be raised to life and die a second time when they are found guilty of disobeying God's command to repent and turn to Jesus. These persons will be cast alive into the Lake of Fire, or Gehenna. [Revelation 20:15] And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire. "And I saw a great white throne and Him who sat upon it, from whose presence the earth and heaven fled away, and no place was found for them. And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and the books were opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged, every one of them according to their deeds... and death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire." [Revelation 20:11-15]. How do we get written into the book of life? Thankfully the Bible tells us plainly. We must receive Jesus as our Lord and Saviour; "Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God— children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God." [John 1:12,13] And in this Scripture we see the second birth. This isn't as popular as you might think. The world and those of the world hate Jesus; "He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him." [John 1:10,11] And without this second birth comes the second death for those who don't receive Jesus as Lord and Saviour!

Some ask, "How could a God of love allow such a thing to happen?" We look at the universe through the eyes of sinful men. We do not perceive sin the way the perfect righteousness of God does. When we say it does not seem fair to condemn sinners to such, we are doing so from tainted perspectives. If the Lord does a thing, then that thing is just. However, God did love us enough to send a rescuer our way. Jesus Christ died for our sins that we might live. If we turn our backs on Him, then how can we plead "unfair!" when we are condemned in our sins?

13.3 BORN TWICE AND DIE ONCE

There is a curious paradox that is presented in the pages of the Bible that a great majority of people have not understood. Jesus described a physical birth that every person will experience; and a second spiritual birth that is necessary in order to obtain eternal life. Jesus said that because of our sin and sin nature, we are all already under the condemnation of God and dead in our sins. Once we understand who Jesus is and the reason that He came into the world, we have the opportunity to be born again a second time. At that moment, our spirit within that was formerly dead, comes alive: (i) Physical Birth, (ii) Spiritual Birth, (iii) Physical Death, and (iv) Eternal Life.

Jesus told Nicodemus this powerful truth: You must be born again [John 3:7]. According to Jesus here is why we must be born again: Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except, a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God [John 3:3]. The way to avoid the second death is to be a partaker in the second birth! Jesus said that there were two necessary parts in being "born again". He referred to it as "being born of the water and the Spirit". Unless, we are born again, we cannot see the kingdom of God. You will see in the Bible that Jesus went on to be even more specific about this second birth: Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God [John 3:5]. Not only do we have to be born a second time, but that second birth involves being born of water and of the Spirit. This second birth or new birth is available to all people. The Lord is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance [2 Peter 3:9]. He does not want anybody to experience the second death.

Later, following His resurrection, He will send out the apostles to "make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit." [Matthew 28:18-20, Mark 16:15,16]. Obeying His commands, the apostles taught the believers on the day of Pentecost to "repent, and be baptized in the name of Jesus for the forgiveness of sins, and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" [Acts 2:37,38]. When the Ethiopian nobleman heard the gospel and then saw some water, he expressed the desire to be baptized in the water, and subsequently was [Acts 8:35-39]. Saul of Tarsus was told, "Arise, and be baptized, washing away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord." (Acts 22:16). This is how "baptism does also now save (us)" [1 Peter 3:20,21].

Jesus promised to send the Spirit to guide the apostles unto all the truth [John 16:12-14]. When the apostles received and taught that truth, and people obeyed it, they were purified. As Peter later wrote, "Since you have in obedience to the truth purified your souls ...for you have been born again not of seed which is perishable, but imperishable, that is, through the living and abiding word of God." (1 Peter 1:22,23). Since it was the Spirit who revealed this word of truth, when we obey the word, Jesus said we are "born of water and the Spirit" [James 1:21, 18; 1 Corinthians 12:13; Ephesians 5:26].

For those who have been born twice, they can only die once. There is no future judgment for those who have experienced this second birth by accepting Jesus' death on the cross for their sins. They will never die again. If you are not born again, which according to Jesus means being born of water and of the Spirit, then you are on a path to dying twice. The time is now to repent of your sins and experience the mercy and grace of our Lord Jesus Christ through baptism in his name and the gift of the Holy Ghost. Be born again!

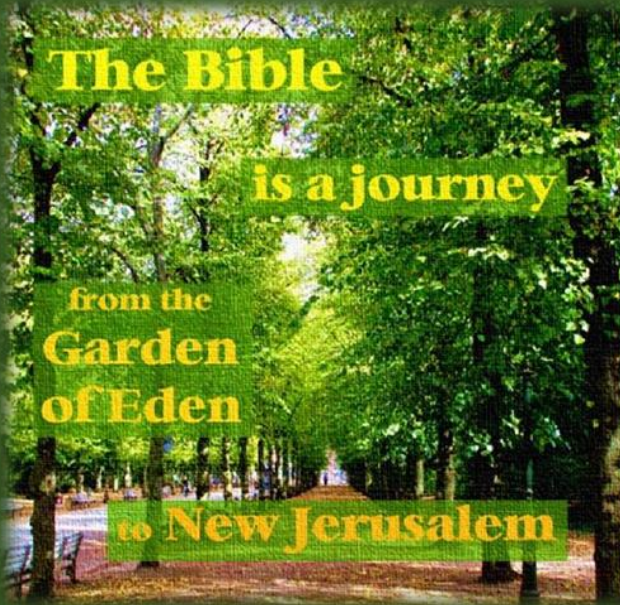
13.4 CONCLUSION

The present day: every person has the opportunity to hear about Jesus' death for all sins, accept Him as their Saviour and be saved. If any person dies prior to receiving Jesus as their Saviour, they will be lost forever. This is the First Death. Jesus will return for His church and remove all those who love Him from the earth, taking them back to heaven. Those who have died believing in Jesus will be raised from the dead at that time and also meet the Lord in the air. This is the First Resurrection. The Seven Year Tribulation Period begins. God will bring judgment to the world that has rejected Christ. During this time, a remnant of Israel will receive Jesus as their true Messiah and also be saved. Jesus will return to earth with His redeemed church at the end of the seven year Tribulation. This will begin the one thousand year Kingdom of the Messiah, as promised to David in which Jesus will rule over the earth. Upon the end of the One-thousand years, the unsaved dead will be resurrected to face the Great White Throne Judgement of God as described in Revelation 20:11. This is the Second Resurrection. All those who stand before the Great White Throne are found guilty and cast alive into the Lake of Fire. This is the Second Death.

The process of being born again is God regenerating us into new creations! "Regeneration is the work of God through the Holy Spirit within a person who has "saving faith," in which a new nature is given that makes the person capable of doing the will of God. Whereas conversion looks at the salvation experience from a human perspective, regeneration describes the same experience from a divine perspective. While the term regeneration occurs in only one verse to describe this experience [Titus 3:5], it is also described as being 'born again' [John 3:3,7]." Being born again, isn't something we do. It is a spiritual process we experience, and we are never the same. We do make the decision to believe in Jesus and commit to His Way, the Holy Spirit does the rest with the co-operation of our spirit. And then we come to know that we are 'born again' because we live in His image and His Holy Spirit tells our spirit that we are His. [Romans 8:15,16]

CHAPTER XIV

Creation Began in a Garden but
it's going to End in a City



14.1 INTRODUCTION

The Bible is a stunning piece of literature, even if you don't believe anything written in it! It was penned by at least 40 traditional authors (inestimably more contributed in some capacity) and written in three languages, Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek. In reality, we know many languages were used to pass down oral stories from the earliest times in the biblical narrative until they were later codified in the book and language we find them in today. However, what is more impressive yet, is the story it is telling.

It tells the epic story of God and his creation, of blessing, temptation, sin, exile, and salvation. For those of us reading this today, we have the advantage of knowing the entire story was leading to Jesus. All in all, it is an epic book telling an even more epic story, which begs the question, how does it end?

But what I find interesting is that the Bible only begins in the garden. It doesn't end in a garden; it ends in a city. This has huge implications for human flourishing. The creation of New Jerusalem does not occur as an unexpected development, a belated after-thought in the mind of God. On the contrary, from the very beginning of creation, God intended that people, made in his image, should inhabit with him an earthly city.

When we look at the New Jerusalem [Revelation 21 & 22], we discover something strange. In the midst of the city is a crystal river, and on each side of the river is the Tree of Life, bearing fruit and leaves which heal the nations of all their wounds and the effects of the divine covenant curse. This city is the Garden of Eden, remade. The City is the fulfillment of the purposes of the Eden of God. We began in a garden but will end in a city; God's purpose for humanity is urban! Why? So the city is God's invention and design, not just a sociological phenomenon or invention of humankind.

14.2 THE GARDEN OF EDEN

Garden of Eden, in the Old Testament Book of Genesis, biblical earthly paradise inhabited by the first created man and woman, Adam and Eve, prior to their expulsion for disobeying the commandments of God. It is also called in Genesis the Garden of Yahweh, the God of Israel, and, in Ezekiel, the Garden of God. When creating them, God instilled within people an innate desire to be city-builders. This inclination to live in community is not lost when Adam and Eve are expelled from the Garden of Eden for disobeying God. The author of Genesis notes briefly that Cain began the construction of a city, which he names after his son Enoch (Genesis 4:17). Later, in Genesis 11, the account of the building of Babel has an ominous feel, as the earth's population joins together to create a city that will define their existence, standing in opposition to God. This city, which is the antithesis of the earthly metropolis that God desires to create, is called Babel, the Hebrew name for Babylon.

Throughout Scripture, Babylon symbolizes humanity's rejection of and antagonism towards God's sovereignty. The citizens of Babylon yearn for absolute autonomy so that they alone may determine their own future. In doing so, they arrogantly dismiss their true status as God-created and God-dependent beings. In the book of Revelation, 'Babylon' exists today in contrast to the New Jerusalem that is yet to come (Revelation 17:1-18:24; Revelation 21:1-22:5).

Against the background of Babel, God initiates through the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob a process to reclaim the earth from the impact of human corruption, with the aim of creating a city where he will dwell with redeemed people from every nation, tribe and language. In anticipation of this goal, and by way of foreshadowing it, God redeems unjustly enslaved Israelites from the grasp of a despotic, Egyptian tyrant so that they may dwell with him in his holy city. After God miraculously rescues them from a ferocious assault by Egyptian charioteers, the Israelites

anticipate their future with God, when they sing: You will bring them in and plant them on your own mountain, the place, O Lord, which you have made for your abode, the sanctuary, O Lord, which your hands have established (Exodus 15:17).

This prediction is partially fulfilled after David captures Jerusalem from the Jebusites (2 Samuel 5:6-10), establishing the city as the capital of the territory promised by God to the patriarchs. At Jerusalem, on Mount Zion, Solomon constructs a temple to house the ark of the covenant, the footstool of God's heavenly throne. Here God comes to dwell, as his glory fills the temple (2 Kings 8:10-11), as it had previously filled the tabernacle (Exodus 40:34-35).

While God's presence sets Jerusalem apart from every other city, making it an object of praise, as reflected in Psalm 48 and elsewhere, the ancient city merely foreshadows a more glorious city that is yet to come. As the Old Testament prophets highlight, the citizens of ancient Jerusalem fail to maintain the holy character of the city.

14.3 THE CITY - NEW JERUSALEM

Jerusalem itself was a powerful symbol for the apostle John. It was the first and only city where God resided in a permanent holy house, the first city where kings worshiped the true Creator. At the heart of the Israelites' Promised Land, Jerusalem represented the ultimate Promised Land: all of restored creation. Toward the end of the 8th century BC Isaiah anticipated not only the destruction of a corrupt Jerusalem by the Babylonians and its restoration under a Persian king, Cyrus, but he foresaw a time when God would establish a more glorious Jerusalem, free from every kind of evil (Isaiah 62:1-12). To this end, prophet Isaiah predicted that God would create a new Jerusalem, an action that would be equivalent to creating 'new heavens and a new earth' (Isaiah 65:17-18).

The Old Testament hope of a radically transformed Jerusalem shapes expectations regarding the future found in the New Testament. As the apostle Paul observes in Philippians 3:20: "Our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ." While Jesus's followers are citizens of the heavenly Jerusalem, they must await his return before New Jerusalem will be established on a renewed earth, bringing to fulfillment God's purpose in creating this world.

In apostle John's vision of this great rebirth, he saw a new heaven and earth—a clear reference to the very beginning of the biblical narrative. He depicts the reunion of heaven and earth as the descent of a new Jerusalem. Unlike the old Jerusalem that was corrupted and dishonoured by most of Israel's kings, the new Jerusalem would be ruled by a divine king. This new city would be built by God, not by human hands.

Amazing! So, what did it look like? "Then he saw a river of the water of life, clear as crystal, coming from the throne of God and of the Lamb, in the middle of its street. On either side of the river was the tree of life, bearing twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit every month, and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations". (Revelation 21)

The apostle John's vision of a gigantic, golden city brings the book of Revelation to a dramatic conclusion. The vision recorded in Revelation 21:1-22:5 forms the climax to a series of amazing visions that reveal through rich imagery God's plans for humanity and the world. The descent of this extraordinary city from heaven to earth marks the goal of God's creative and redemptive activity.

14.4 SOME SIGNIFICANT CONNECTION BETWEEN GARDEN OF EDEN AND NEW JERUSALEM

John's vision of the city abounds with imagery drawn from the rest of Scripture. Elements of the Garden of Eden reappear in Revelation 21-22, especially the tree of life (Revelation 22:2; Genesis 2:9; 3:22-24). Importantly, in New Jerusalem the consequences of Adam and Eve's expulsion from Eden are fully reversed. People are no longer barred from eating of the tree's life-renewing fruit. God and humans enjoy each other's presence, living together in perfect harmony.

It's an all-new Garden of Eden, the paradise of eternal life with God! This is an image of the Old Testament prophetic echoing all the way back to the first pages of Genesis. He saw the tree of life there, accessible to all and eternally yielding fruit. It could do this because its roots had access to the eternal river of life, which can dispense nourishment to all the new creation because it flows from the presence of God himself.

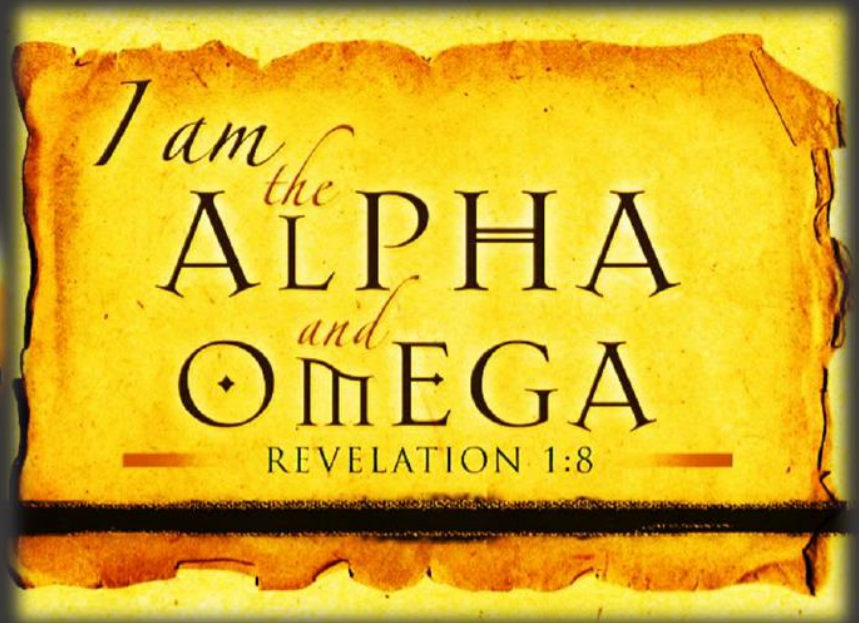
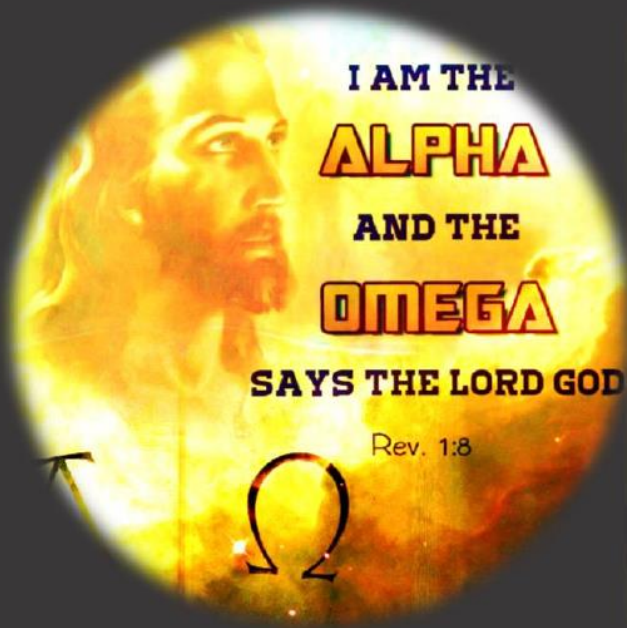
However, in John's account of a garden, humanity wasn't represented by a couple. John describes seeing all the nations there, working to cultivate the garden as Adam and Eve did in Genesis. For John, the fulfillment of God's purpose through Jesus would result in the restoration of humans to their place as co-rulers of God's world, ready to work with God to take creation into uncharted territory.

14.5 CONCLUSION

God isn't preparing for us to go back to the Garden of Eden. He has something better for us. He is preparing a Garden of Eden remade, a Holy City, the New Jerusalem. If our story starts in a garden and ends in a city, perhaps it means we are meant to move towards something greater, towards something more developed. Maybe it means, with a righteous human touch, the world can reach a better and more productive state.

CHAPTER XV

Genesis and Revelation- The Alpha and Omega of God's written Word



15.1 INTRODUCTION

The Bible is huge, about 611,000 words long, all divvied up across 66 smaller documents called the “Books” of the Bible. That’s because the Bible is a collection of writings from around 40 different authors’ writing at different times. In some ways, that makes it easier to approach the Bible. We can read it in “chunks” rather than needing to read the whole Bible at once. But it also makes it a bit confusing. The Bible itself is a book. In fact, the word “Bible” comes from the Latin and Greek words for “book” (*biblia* and *biblos*, respectively). But it’s a Book of Books. **The book of Revelation is essentially a sequel to the book of Genesis. They are the two bookends of the Bible- the Word of God.** Genesis means beginnings and Genesis is from the Greek word *apokalupsis* and literally means an unveiling of something previously hidden. Thus, Genesis is the book of the world’s beginnings, while Revelation is the book of the unveiling of the world’s future. The great themes of the Bible start in Genesis and are progressively revealed throughout the Bible, culminating in the Revelation. The two books together bound all history and bound all of God’s revelations to mankind. They constitute the alpha and omega of God’s written Word, the Book of Beginnings and the Book of Unveilings.

As Christians, it is vital that we see the world as He sees it. Let's look at the Bible in light of God's heart for the world, and we will see that from Genesis to the Revelation He is beckoning all of us to join Him in bringing all mankind to His throne. The awesome and most obvious similarities between the scenes in the book of Revelation 21: 1–4 and Genesis 2 is: GOD IS WITH MAN. God’s Holy Presence is with MAN before they sin. MAN is not going to heaven but God Himself will once again BE WITH MAN here on earth.

15.2 CREATION: THE HEAVENS AND EARTH

15.2.1 Genesis: The Beginning of the End

Genesis 1:1-2:4a In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.....**Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them.....These are the generations of the heavens and of the earth when they were created, in the day that the Lord God made the earth and the heavens.**

15.2.2 Revelation: The End of the Beginning

Revelation 21:1-5 And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away;And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven,And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he said unto me, Write: for these **words are true and faithful.**

15.3 THE SANCTUARY, THE TREE OF LIFE AND THE RIVER

15.3.1 Genesis: The Beginning of the End

Genesis 2:5-15 The Eden Sanctuary, the Tree of Life and the river that flowed out of Eden

And every plant of the field before it was in the earth, and every herb of the field before it grew.....**And the Lord God planted a garden eastward in Eden; and there he put the man whom he had formed.....And out of the ground made the Lord God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of knowledge of good and evil. And a river went out of Eden to water the garden; and from thence it was parted, and became into four heads...And the Lord God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it.**

15.3.2 Revelation: The End of the Beginning

Revelation 21:10-22:2 The Sanctuary of the New Jerusalem, the river that flowed from the New Jerusalem, and the Tree of Life

And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and shewed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God,...**And he shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.**

15.4 ACCESS TO THE TREE OF LIFE AND THE WATER OF LIFE

15.4.1 Genesis: The Beginning of the End

Genesis 3:21-24 Tree of Life and the Water of Life Guarded

Unto Adam also and to his wife did the Lord God make coats of skins and clothed them. And the Lord God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil: and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever: Therefore the Lord God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken. So, he drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life.

15.4.2 Revelation: The End of the Beginning

Revelation 22:14-17 Right to the Tree of Life and the Water of Life

Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life and may enter in through the gates into the city. For without are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie. I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star. And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.

15.5 DARKNESS, LIGHT AND SEA (WATER)

15.5.1 Genesis: The Beginning of the End

Genesis 1:2-18 The Sun, Moon, Stars and Sea

And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters. And God said, Let there be light: and there was light. And God saw the light, that it was good: and God divided the light from the darkness...**And God said, Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters. And God made the firmament, and divided the waters which were under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament: and it was so...****And God said, Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and years: And let them be for lights in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth: and it was so. And God made two great lights; the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night: he made the stars also. And God set them in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth, And to rule over the day and over the night, and to divide the light from the darkness: and God saw that it was good.**

Genesis 37:9 Sun, Moon, and Stars are associated with Israel

And he dreamed yet another dream, and told it his brethren, and said, Behold, I have dreamed a dream more; and, behold, the sun and the moon and the eleven stars made obeisance to me.

15.5.2 Revelation: The End of the Beginning

Revelation 6:13, 8:12, 16:8 No more Darkness, Sun, Moon, Stars and Sea

And the stars of heaven fell unto the earth, even as a fig tree casteth her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind (Revelation 6:13). And the fourth angel sounded, and the third part of the sun was smitten, and the third part of the moon, and the third part of the stars; so as the third part of them was darkened, and the day shone not for a third part of it, and the night likewise. (Revelation 8:12) And the fourth angel poured out his vial upon the sun; and power was given unto him to scorch men with fire. (Revelation 16:8) And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof. (Revelation 21:23) And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light: and they shall reign for ever and ever. (Revelation 22:5) And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea. (Revelation 21:1)

Revelation 12:1 Sun, Moon, and Stars are associated again with Israel

And there appeared a great wonder in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars:

15.6 CREATION OF MAN, MAN'S PURPOSE / ROLE: HUMAN SERVICE TO GOD

15.6.1 Genesis: The Beginning of the End

Genesis 1:26-28; 2:15 Man was created in God's image

And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. So God created man in his own image, in the image of God; created them as male and female. And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth. (Genesis 1:26-28) And the LORD God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it. (Genesis 2:15)

15.6.2 Revelation: The End of the Beginning

Revelation 20:6; 22:3-7 Man's role is to serve God and to be identified with him.

Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years. (Revelation 20:6) And there shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him: And they shall see his face; and his name shall be in their foreheads. And they shall see his face; and his name shall be in their foreheads. And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light: and they shall reign for ever and ever. And he said unto me, These sayings are faithful and

true: and the Lord God of the holy prophets sent his angel to shew unto his servants the things which must shortly be done. Behold, I come quickly: blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book. (Revelation 22:3-7)

15.7 THE BRIDEGROOM, THE BRIDE AND THE WEDDING

15.7.1 Genesis: The Beginning of the End

Genesis 2:18-25 The bridegroom (Adam), the bride (Eve) and the wedding of Adam and Eve

And the Lord God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him. And out of the ground the Lord God formed every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air; and brought them unto Adam to see what he would call them: and whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that was the name thereof. And Adam gave names to all cattle, and to the fowl of the air, and to every beast of the field; but for Adam there was not found a help meet for him. And the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof; And the rib, which the Lord God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man. And Adam said, this is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man. Therefore, shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh. And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed.

Genesis 24:2-67 A bride sought for Abraham's son (Isaac) and found

And Abraham said unto his eldest servant of his house, that ruled over all that he had, Put, I pray thee, thy hand under my thigh: And I will make thee swear by the Lord, the God of heaven, and the God of the earth, that thou shalt not take a wife unto my son of the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I dwell: But thou shalt go unto my country, and to my kindred, and take a wife unto my son Isaac....**And Isaac brought her into his mother Sarah's tent, and took Rebekah, and she became his wife; and he loved her: and Isaac was comforted after his mother's death.**

15.7.2 Revelation: The End of the Beginning

Revelation 19:7-9; 21:2-9 The Bride (the Church), and her Bridegroom (Christ) the wedding of the Lamb

Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints. And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he saith unto me, These are the true sayings of God. (Revelation 19:7-9) And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away. And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful. And he said unto me, It is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely. He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son...And there came unto me one of the seven angels which had the seven vials full of the seven last plagues, and talked with me, saying, Come hither, I will shew thee the bride, the Lamb's wife. (Revelation 21:2-9)

15.8 SATAN (SERPENT / RED DRAGON) AND THE WOMAN

15.8.1 Genesis: The Beginning of the End

Genesis 3:1-13 Demonic deception of human being – Serpent and Eve

Now the serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden? And the woman said unto the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden: But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die. And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die: For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil ... and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat. And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons. And they heard the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day: and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God amongst the trees of the garden. And the Lord God called unto Adam, and said unto him, Where art thou? And he said, I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself. And he said, Who told thee that thou wast naked? Hast thou eaten of the tree, whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldest not eat? And the man said, The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat. And the Lord God said unto the woman, What is this that thou hast done? And the woman said, The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat.

15.8.2 Revelation: The End of the Beginning

Revelation 12:1-17 Satan (Red Dragon / Old Serpent) and "the Woman," the "new Eve"

And there appeared a great wonder in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars: And she being with child cried, travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered. And there appeared another wonder in heaven; and behold a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads. And his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth: and the dragon stood before the woman which was ready to be delivered, for to devour her child as soon as it was born. And she brought forth a man child, who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron: and her child was caught up unto God, and to his throne. And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared of God, that they should feed her there a thousand two hundred and threescore days... And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him....Therefore rejoice, ye heavens, and ye that dwell in them. Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea! for the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time. And when the dragon saw that he was cast unto the earth, he persecuted the woman which brought forth the man child. And to the woman were given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness, into her place, where she is nourished for a time, and times, and half a time, from the face of the serpent. And the serpent cast out of his mouth water as a flood after the woman, that he might cause her to be carried away of the flood. And the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed up the flood which the dragon cast out of his mouth. And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.

15.9 MAN WITH DIRECT FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD- PHYSICAL PRESENCE OF GOD

15.9.1 Genesis: The Beginning of the End

Genesis 1-4 Not 100% of the time. The Lord was not present during the testing and fall of Adam and Eve.

And they heard the voice of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day: and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God amongst the trees of the garden. And the LORD God called unto Adam, and said unto him, Where art thou? And he said, I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself. (Genesis 3: 8-10)

15.9.2 Revelation: The End of the Beginning

Revelation 21:3; 22:4 100% of the time. The tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them.

And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. And they shall see his face; and his name shall be in their foreheads.

15.10 SERPENT / SATAN - ENTRY AND EXIT

15.10.1 Genesis: The Beginning of the End

Genesis 3:1-15 Entry of Serpent / Satan

Now the serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden? And the woman said unto the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden: But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die. And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die: For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.... And the Lord God said unto the woman, What is this that thou hast done? And the woman said, The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat. And the Lord God said unto the serpent, Because thou hast done this, thou art cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field; upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life: And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.

15.10.2 Revelation: The End of the Beginning

Revelation 20: 1-10 Exit of Serpent / Satan

And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years, And cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled: and after that he must be loosed a little season...And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, And shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog, and Magog, to gather them together to battle: the number of whom is as the sand of the sea. And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city: and fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured

them. And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever.

15.11 THE CURSE / DEATH: DIVINE PUNISHMENT

15.11.1 Genesis: The Beginning of the End

Genesis 3:14-19: 22-24; 4:11-15 Curse pronounced- God cursed the serpent, the woman, and the man

And the Lord God said unto the serpent, Because thou hast done this, thou art cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field; upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life: And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel. Unto the woman he said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee. And unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life; Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field; In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.

Genesis 3:22-24 Man driven out from Eden And the Lord God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil: and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever: Therefore the Lord God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken. However, man falls, his domination was ceased and driven out from Eden. So he drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life.

Genesis 4:11-15: And now art thou cursed from the earth, which hath opened her mouth to receive thy brother's blood from thy hand; When thou tillest the ground, it shall not henceforth yield unto thee her strength; a fugitive and a vagabond shalt thou be in the earth. And Cain said unto the LORD, My punishment is greater than I can bear. Behold, thou hast driven me out this day from the face of the earth; and from thy face shall I be hid; and I shall be a fugitive and a vagabond in the earth; and it shall come to pass, that every one that findeth me shall slay me. And the LORD said unto him, Therefore whosoever slayeth Cain, vengeance shall be taken on him sevenfold. And the LORD set a mark upon Cain, lest any finding him should kill him.

Genesis 6-9 A flood from God to destroy an evil generation.

15.11.2 Revelation: The End of the Beginning

Revelation 20:3, 8, 14-15; 21:4; 22:3 The curse is abolished; No more tears, death, sorrow, crying, pain, or curse

Revelation 21:4 And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.

Revelation 22:3 And there shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him:

Revelation 12: A flood from Satan to destroy an elect generation.

Revelation 20: 4-6, 8: And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years. And shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog, and Magog, to gather them together to battle: the number of whom is as the sand of the sea.

Revelation 20:14-15: And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.

Revelation 11: 18 And the nations were angry, and thy wrath is come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged, and that thou shouldest give reward unto thy servants the prophets, and to the saints, and them that fear thy name, small and great; and shouldest destroy them which destroy the earth.

15.12 THE DIVINE REDEMPTION

15.12.1 Genesis: The Beginning of the End

Genesis 3:15; 22:17 The Redeemer is promised

Genesis 3:15: And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.

Genesis 22: 17: That in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies;

Genesis 3:21: Unto Adam also and to his wife did the LORD God make coats of skins, and clothed them.

Genesis 4:1 : And Adam knew Eve his wife; and she conceived, and bare Cain, and said, I have gotten a man from the LORD.

Genesis 4:4: And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof. And the LORD had respect unto Abel and to his offering:

Genesis 4: 26: And to Seth, to him also there was born a son; and he called his name Enos: then began men to call upon the name of the LORD.

15.12.2 Revelation: The End of the Beginning

Revelation 20:4-6;21:22-27; 22:3-5 The victorious Redeemer reigns

Revelation 20:4-6: And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.

Revelation 21: 22-27: And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it. And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof. And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it: and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour into it. And the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day: for there shall be no night there. And they shall bring the glory and honour of the nations into it. And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life.

Revelation 22: 3-5: And there shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him: And they shall see his face; and his name shall be in their foreheads. And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light: and they shall reign for ever and ever.

15.13 BABYLON AND JUDGMENT

15.13.1 Genesis: The Beginning of the End

Genesis 10:10; 11:1-4 Babylon built; judgment on the nations

Genesis 10:8-10: 8 And Cush begat Nimrod (a great rebel and King, and hidden Anti-God, the founder of Babylon): he began to be a mighty one in the earth. He was a mighty hunter before the Lord: wherefore it is said, Even as Nimrod the mighty hunter before the Lord. And the beginning of his kingdom was Babel, and Erech, and Accad, and Calneh, in the land of Shinar.

Genesis 11:1-4: 11 And the whole earth was of one language, and of one speech. And it came to pass, as they journeyed from the east, that they found a plain in the land of Shinar; and they dwelt there. And they said one to another, Go to, let us make brick, and burn them thoroughly. And they had brick for stone, and slime had they for mortar. And they said, Go to, let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth.

15.13.2 Revelation: The End of the Beginning

Revelation 13:18; 14:6-20 Babylon destroyed; judgment on the nations

Revelation 13:18: The Beast, the great rebel, a King manifested Anti-God, the reviver of Babylon Here is wisdom. Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast: for it is the number of a man; and his number is Six hundred threescore and six.

Revelation 14:6-20: And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people, Saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters. And there followed another angel, saying, Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication... **And the winepress was trodden without the city, and blood came out of the winepress, even unto the horse bridles, by the space of a thousand and six hundred furlongs.**

15.14 SODOM AND EGYPT

15.14.1 Genesis: The Beginning of the End

Genesis 10:19 Sodom and Egypt, the place of corruption and temptation

And the border of the Canaanites was from Sidon, as thou comest to Gerar, unto Gaza; as thou goest, unto Sodom, and Gomorrah, and Admah, and Zeboim, even unto Lasha.

15.14.2 Revelation: The End of the Beginning

Revelation 11:8 Sodom and Egypt again: spiritually representing Jerusalem

And their dead bodies shall lie in the street of the great city, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified.

15.15 VITAL ROLE OF RIGHTEOUS ANGELS IN MINISTERING TO HUMANS

15.15.1 Genesis: The Beginning of the End

Genesis 3:24 Cherubim, first mentioned in connection with man

So he drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life.

Genesis 19 Two angels acting for God on behalf of His people

And there came two angels to Sodom at even; and Lot sat in the gate of Sodom: and Lot seeing them rose up to meet them; and he bowed himself with his face toward the ground...*And Lot went up out of Zoar, and dwelt in the mountain, and his two daughters with him; for he feared to dwell in Zoar: and he dwelt in a cave, he and his two daughters.*

15.15.2 Revelation: The End of the Beginning

Revelation 19:17-18; 20:1-3; 21:9-21; 22:6, 16 Cherubim, finally mentioned in connection with man

Revelation 17-18 And I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the fowls that fly in the midst of heaven, Come and gather yourselves together unto the supper of the great God; That ye may eat the flesh of kings, and the flesh of captains, and the flesh of mighty men, and the flesh of horses, and of them that sit on them, and the flesh of all men, both free and bond, both small and great.

Revelation 20:1-3 And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years, And cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled: and after that he must be loosed a little season.

Revelation 21:9-21 And there came unto me one of the seven angels which had the seven vials full of the seven last plagues, and talked with me, saying, Come hither, I will shew thee the bride, the Lamb's wife....

Revelation 22:6, 16 And he said unto me, These sayings are faithful and true: and the Lord God of the holy prophets sent his angel to shew unto his servants the things which must shortly be done. I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star.

15.16 GOD'S COVENANT WITH THE EARTH

15.16.1 Genesis: The Beginning of the End

Genesis 9:13-14,16 The Bow, the token of God's covenant with the Earth

I do set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a token of a covenant between me and the earth. And it shall come to pass, when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the bow shall be seen in the cloud: And the bow shall be in the cloud; and I will look upon it, that I may remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is upon the earth.

15.16.2 Revelation: The End of the Beginning

Revelation 4:3; 10:1 The Bow, betokening God's remembrance of His covenant with the Earth

Revelation 4:3 And he that sat was to look upon like a jasper and a sardine stone: and there was a rainbow round about the throne, in sight like unto an emerald.

Revelation 10:1 And I saw another mighty angel come down from heaven, clothed with a cloud: and a rainbow was upon his head, and his face was as it were the sun, and his feet as pillars of fire:

15.17 DIVINE PROVISION OF CLOTHING

15.17.1 Genesis: The Beginning of the End

Genesis 3:21 Unto Adam also and to his wife did the LORD God make coats of skins, and clothed them.

15.17.2 Revelation: The End of the Beginning

Revelation 19:8, 14 And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints. And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean.

15.18 WORSHIP

15.18.1 Genesis: The Beginning of the End

Genesis 4:3-5 And in process of time it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the Lord. And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof. And the Lord had respect unto Abel and to his offering: But unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect. And Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell.

15.18.2 Revelation: The End of the Beginning

Revelation 19:10, 20 And I fell at his feet to worship him. And he said unto me, See thou do it not: I am thy fellow servant, and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus: worship God: for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy. And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone.

Revelation 22:8-9 And I John saw these things, and heard them. And when I had heard and seen, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel which shewed me these things. Then saith he unto me, See thou do it not: for I am thy fellow servant, and of thy brethren the prophets, and of them which keep the sayings of this book: worship God.

15.19 CITY, GOLD AND PRECIOUS STONES

15.19.1 Genesis: The Beginning of the End

Genesis 4:17 And Cain knew his wife; and she conceived, and bare Enoch: and he builded a city, and called the name of the city, after the name of his son, Enoch.

Genesis 2:12 And the gold of that land is good: there is bdellium and the onyx stone.

15.19.2 Revelation: The End of the Beginning

Revelation 21:2, 22:19 And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.

Revelation 21:18, 21 And the building of the wall of it was of jasper: and the city was pure gold, like unto clear glass. And the twelve gates were twelve pearls: every several gate was of one pearl: and the street of the city was pure gold, as it were transparent glass.

15.20 CONCLUSION

Pretty amazing! God's eternal plan includes us — people he created to worship him on the restored, new earth! In Genesis we read of significant beginnings. In Revelation we read of significant endings. It is not at all surprising then that in Revelation both God and Jesus Christ are designated as the beginning and the end.

CHAPTER XVI

Conclusion



The Book of Revelation often has been regarded as a mysterious book, quite beyond the comprehension of the average lay reader. Its many references to angelic beings, its elaborate description of Christ as he appears in the heavenly courts, its use of such mystic numbers as three, seven, twelve, and their multiples, the accounts of strange beasts, symbolic names, and definite time periods — all suggest some hidden and esoteric meaning that supposedly can be detected only by an expert. For these reasons, many people have ignored the book, feeling that any attempt to understand it is futile. Other people have taken an opposite attitude and have found in this book what they believe to be predictions of whole series of events, many of which have already occurred and the remainder of which are about to take place in the near future. The basis for these views, many of which sound strange and fantastic, is found in the elaborate symbolism used in the book. The use of symbols has an important place in religious literature, for there is no other way in which a person can talk or even think about that which is beyond the realm of finite human experience. But there is always a danger that the symbols may be interpreted in a way that was not intended by the author who used them. Only in regard to the content in which the symbols are used can we determine what the author meant.

One source of confusion has been the result of a failure to distinguish between prophetic writing and apocalyptic writing. The prophets used a particular literary form in which they expressed their messages; the apocalyptic writers used a different literary form, one that was better suited to the particular purpose that they had in mind. To understand either group, one must interpret their writings by considering the respective literary form that they used. The characteristics of apocalyptic writing are fairly well known. In addition to the Book of Daniel and the Book of Revelation, a wealth of apocalyptic writing exists in the Apocrypha and the Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament. A careful study of these writings shows that they have a number of common characteristics: They were produced in times of crises; they describe the conflict between the forces of good and evil; future events are made known through dreams and visions; the end of the conflict is to come shortly; and those who remain faithful through persecution and trial are promised a reward in the messianic kingdom soon to be established. The messages are for the benefit of the persecuted and are usually conveyed by means of symbols that only the faithful can understand.

Interpreted in light of these characteristics, the Revelation to John is comparatively easy to understand. In many respects, it is the least original of any of the New Testament writings. In its style of writing, the number and kind of symbols that are used, and the purpose for which it was written, the book closely follows the precedent established in the older apocalyptic writings. The unique feature about Revelation is the particular occasion that caused it to be written. Toward the end of the first century of the Christian era, the attitude of the Roman government toward Christianity became especially hostile. Nero, the Roman emperor, charged that Christians were to blame for the burning of Rome. Although the charge was false, it was sufficient to cause many people to regard the new Christian movement with suspicion. Jews and Romans alike resented the fact that Christians condemned so many of the things they were doing, and they especially disliked the belief on the part of Christians that their religion was superior to the older faiths that had been honored for centuries. The Christians often held their meetings in secret places, and their critics imagined that they were doing all sorts of evil things. It was easy to circulate rumors of this kind, and along with other things, Christians were charged with plotting against the Roman government. As the opposition to Christianity became more intense, the followers of the new movement were asked to prove their loyalty to the Roman government by denouncing Christ and by worshipping the statue of the emperor. When they refused to do this, they were tortured and even put to death.

Under these conditions, the Revelation to John was written. It would be difficult to imagine anything more appropriate for the members of Christian churches at that time. They needed encouragement and the assurance that their trials would soon be over, that the evil powers of the

earth would be destroyed, and that the triumph of righteousness would be established in the world. The message of Revelation was intended for this particular time and set of circumstances. Christians familiar with the older apocalyptic writings would understand the book's symbolism, for practically everything John said to his contemporaries was said before to people who suffered under similar circumstances. It is a mistake to suppose that John was predicting events that would take place in the later centuries of Christian history. Writing to the people of his own day about events that would happen while they were still living, he states that Christ will return while those who put him to death on the cross are still living. The permanent significance of Revelation lies in the author's conviction that right will ultimately triumph over evil.



Samir Stephan Kujur

ABOUT THE WRITER

My name is Samir Stephan Kujur, and it's so nice to meet you! In mid 1970s, I was born and brought up in a Christian family. During foundation years of my life (up to 12th standard of my school years), I was in boarding schools and had the opportunity to be part of well architected and disciplined routine life. During these foundation years, moral and spiritual teachings were engrained in my life through regular practice of meditation, attending daily prayers and Holy Mass, etc. In real sense, I was living in His fellowship and enjoying the sweetness of life. However, from early 1990s to mid 2010s, I was drifted away from Him. I left meditation, stopped praying and attending Holy Mass. I felt like I was living in wilderness ... no peace, no success. It was a difficult period and my life literally became hell. I was in trap of devil and was involved in satanic activities. Although I was born and brought up in a Christian family, I never read the complete 66 Books of the Bible (from Genesis Chapter 1 to Revelation Chapter 22) till the age of my late 30s.

After mid 2010s, once again I started meditating but in different format. It was a combination of Raj Yoga, Reiki and Aura Cleansing and reading the Bible. However, this time I was having lots of questions in my mind. Who am I? What is Soul, Spirit, Holy Spirit and their relationship? Who is God? How could there be the Trinity God? What is the relationship between Father, Son and Holy Spirit? and so on ... Also found lots of differences between the words of God in the Bible and Churches' teachings and liturgical practices. I got confused, but never stopped praying and reading the New Testament, Old Testament (different versions- TEV, NIV, KJV, Urantia Book, etc.), Torah and Quran to some extent.

By the Grace of God, I got the answers of my above questions. My life has changed. I am having so many supernatural experiences in my daily life. Here I am sharing some of them as my testimony:

[1] The Vision of {The Divine Mercy}

In between, I got several messages in dreams through departed souls of my loved ones, especially from my grandmother but I didn't believe them because I had no

clarity on their messages. Then I prayed, Lord I need a clear message from you. Then on 20th December 2018 around 4:15am to 4:30am, I had the vision (short Dream) of The Divine Mercy. It was just for a fraction of second. I asked him, Whether I should go to Church or not? He replied, You May Go, then left. No fear or excitement, only plain conversation. I got the confirmation from Him. Now I had no choice to ignore anymore.

[2] The Vision of {The Throne of the Almighty}

Although I got the confirmation, but my little human brain was not satisfied, I said to myself, it was just for a fraction of second, I didn't see Him properly and He left. I thought, maybe it was my illusion. Now I had another doubt, Is Jesus God or is just like one of the God's servants? However, I never stopped praying and reading the Bible.

After about 9 and half months of the vision of The Divine Mercy, I had another vision (long Dream). This time it was The Throne of the Almighty. The date of this vision was on 30th September 2019 between 4:15 am and 5:45am and lasted almost 90 min. Initially, appeared like a bright star at distant on white clouds. Then, it started coming closure to me, and I show The Throne of the Almighty. It looked like someone is sitting on the throne, but face was invisible. As it was approaching closer to me, The Throne of the Almighty was magnifying with increased brightness, and at one point of time it approached next to me with magnified multifold and brightness, which was impossible for me to see it from my eye. However, this brightness had no heat or temperature, but had very pleasant or bliss feeling. After this vision, the LORD revealed my future task i.e. His Will to be fulfilled through me on this earth. They are related to spreading the Good News across the globe, one of the similar type of roles of Prophet Elijah, praying for needy souls (especially who are in captivity of evil spirits), revealing the messages of salvation, always remain in his fellowship and try to walk with Him.

This initiative, the writing of book is also one of the actions to fulfil His Will.

[3] The Dream of The Rapture Event

After about 9 months of the vision of The Throne of the Almighty, I had a dream (short Dream). This time it was The Rapture Event. The date of this dream was on 27th June 2020 between 3:30 am and 4:00 am and lasted about 10-15 min. I saw that some human beings went up in the clouds to meet Yeshua. In night, He appeared in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory (the scene was almost same as described in 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 by Apostle Paul). Yeshua descended from Heaven to receive His people with open hands. As the Scriptures state, there was no light of SUN, MOON or STARS, it was the brightness of His presence. It was a beautiful revelation and had bliss feelings. There were two groups of humankind. The people [one group] who went up in the clouds to meet Yeshua and their earthly bodies were transformed in to glorified bodies [celestial bodies] that happened in fraction of a second as mentioned in 1 Corinthians 15:51-52 and were shining very bright in the presence of Yeshua, and the other group remained on the earth to face consequences of The Great Tribulation. Luckily by the GRACE of GOD, I saw myself being in the group of people who went up in clouds to meet Yeshua, but I remember one of my relatives was in the other group. Then the alarm clock rang at 4:00 am.

Initially I thought it was about the second coming of Yeshua and His 1000-years reign on Earth, but The Holy Spirit revealed me that it was about the Rapture Event that will take place in the pre- tribulation period.

[4] & [5] The Short Vision and The Gift of Tongues

After about 5 and half months [163 days] of the short dream of The Rapture, I received The Gift of Tongues. This time it was The Gift of the Holy Spirit. The date of receiving the gift was on 8th December 2020 between 12:50 am and 1:20 am. On 7th December 2020 around 8:00pm, I was having an in-depth Bible study and reflections on The Rapture events. In between I had a short vision [I was taken away about 15-20 minutes from my natural state], but I could not recall what had happened to me during this short period. I felt like I slept for a while. I do recall that immediate before this event neither I was feeling tired nor sleepy. It transpired all of a sudden and when my eyes opened, I was very much afresh; as nothing had happened to me. There was no sign of feeling a sleep at all. Immediately, I tried to recall what had happened to me but couldn't recall any supernatural sign. I can say that I was taken away for 15-20 minutes from my natural state. Then without wasting my time in thinking about it I continued my study and reflections on the Rapture related events mentioned in the Bible. Once the study was over [around 11:00pm-11:15 pm], I started to watch a video on "HOW CAN I BE FILLED WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT" which was made by Rev. Amit Christian, an Evangelical Bible preacher from India. At the end of the message he said that those who want to receive "THE GIFTS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT", please stand up. He emphasised that it's not a compulsion and requested only those who really want them voluntarily. I knelt down and started praying with the preacher, and all of a sudden, my tongue started praying in unknown heavenly language. My tongue was not in my control and this was the very first prayer in my life [as I remember] that I prayed in the spirit.

[6] Supernatural Experience and the Dream of Angels

After about 4 months [124 days] of The Gift of Tongues, I had another supernatural experience in my life and had a dream of heavenly beings. This time it was The Angels. The date of this event was on 12th April 2021 between 7:25am – 8:00am and a dream around 11:00pm -12:00 night on the same date. On 11th April 2021, we [I & my wife] handed over our all household items to Packers & Movers team for its shifting from Delhi to Odisha, and on 12th April 2021 early morning [after handing over the keys of rented house to the house owner] we started to wait auto taxi to drop us to the railway station. It took us about 30 minutes to get an auto taxi [3 wheeler] and we had left only 35 minutes time to reach the station and board the train. We were also carrying about 6-7 heavy luggage with us, and within this 35 minutes we had to reach, go through the special checking procedure at station [due to COVID] and rush towards the platform no. 5 and board the train.

Practically it was impossible, until and unless the train is delayed or some supernatural miracle happens. We started at 7:25am from Katwaria Sarai [Near IIT, Delhi] and the train was scheduled to depart at 8:00am from Anand Vihar Railway station. The distance between Katwaria Sarai and Anand Vihar Railway station is about 24km, which takes around 45 -60min by auto taxi. In auto both of us kept mum for almost 30 minutes. We had no options left with us, except to remember and surrender everything to Him. We prayed Him individually. I prayed Him "Lord this is your plan that we should

leave Delhi, and now we are in your hands...please take care of us", whereas my wife prayed, "Lord let us not miss the train". We don't know how it happened, but we reached station at 7:50am (in 25 minutes). A coolie with luggage carrier cart was waiting to receive us at railway station. He ask the name of the train, kept our luggage in the cart and said us to follow him. We kept running after him, no one asked or stopped us to check the ticket or scan the luggage at entrance, and by 7:55am we were at platform no. 5 next to the coach of our reserved berths. He also helped us to get in our luggage in the train. Then I thanked him and paid the agreed labor fee INR 400. He smiled and left. We kept the luggage and took our respective berths, and within 1 minute train left the station. The train was on time and left the platform at exactly 8:00am....Wow! what a miracle...We thanked Him for the superb plan.

Around 9:00pm we had our dinner and went back to our respective berths [I took the upper berth]. I read some chapters from the Bible, prayed in heavenly tongue and slept. Around 11:00pm – 12:00 night I had a dream. In the dream I was standing with a small group of people in an unknown place. All of a sudden something like a sea of glass as mentioned in the Revelation 4:6 and 15:2 spread across the ground. It looked like a still calm sea water surface.

Then in my right side at the end of sea I saw a marvelous City / Throne. At once I stepped down on the sea and walked on the water like Peter did in Matthew 14:29. I do remember that I was not afraid of walking on the water surface but after few steps I started sinking similar to Peter had in Matthew 14:30. I didn't cry as Peter did and within no time water came upto the level of my waist. Then I saw three angels came on motor boat [their garment were pure white, I can realise that they were not of this world because they were in their celestial bodies] and one of them stretched forth his hand and caught me as Yeshua did to Peter in Matthew 14:31, and took me with them into the boat.

[7] The Short Vision of Heaven

After about 2 and half months [76 days] of Dream of Angles, I had another short vision. This time it was vision of Heaven. The date of this vision was on 28th June 2021 between 3:40am – 3:50am. It was just for a fraction of second. I saw on clouds opening of Heaven. It was not merely the clouds parting or appearing something on clouds, but opening of Heaven as mentioned in Ezekiel 1:1; Mark 1:10; Acts 7:56 and Revelation 4:1.

The vision was similar to Prophet Micaiah as recorded in 1 Kings 22:19, "I saw the LORD sitting on His Throne, and all the host of heaven standing by Him on His right hand and on His left." The vision was amazing and beyond the human imagination. There is nothing on this world that can be used to compare this. When I had this vision, at once my spirit started praising LORD in heavenly language and I got up.

[8] The Short Vision of Heaven and Fall of Satan

After 3 months [i.e. 84 days] of The Short Vision of Heaven, I had another short vision. This time it was again the Vison of Heaven and Fall of Satan. The date of this vision was on 20th September 2021 between 1:10am – 1:15am and on 21st September 2021 around 12:10am. On 20th September 2021, I saw on clouds opening of Heaven. The

opening of Heaven was similar to my earlier vision of 28th June 2021, and I saw the LORD sitting on His Throne, and all the host of Heaven standing by Him on His right hand and on His left. All the host of Heaven were praising the LORD in the same manner as mentioned in Revelation 12:10 which says, "And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night."

I also saw the Satan and his angels falling down from heaven as mentioned in Revelation 12:8-9 "neither was their place found anymore in heaven. He was cast out unto the earth, and his angels were cast out with him."; and said by Yeshua in Luke 10:18, "And he said unto them, I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven."

And I saw the earth became dark as mentioned in Isaiah 13:10; Joel 2:10; Matthew 24:29; Revelation 6:12 and Revelation 8:12 which say "the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and star shall withdraw their shining." Then my wife put on the fan, and my vision discontinued and I came back to my natural realm. scene in Heaven as well as tone of praise was different from the vision of 20th September 2021. It was something similar to the Alleluia! as mentioned in Revelation 19:1-8 & Psalm 118:24 i.e. "This is the day which the Lord hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it."

Connect With Me: If you would like to connect me, please drop me an email at info@samirstephan.com. I will get back to you soon.

You can also visit me at <https://allrevelations.org>; <https://allrevelation.org>; and <https://allrevelations.com>